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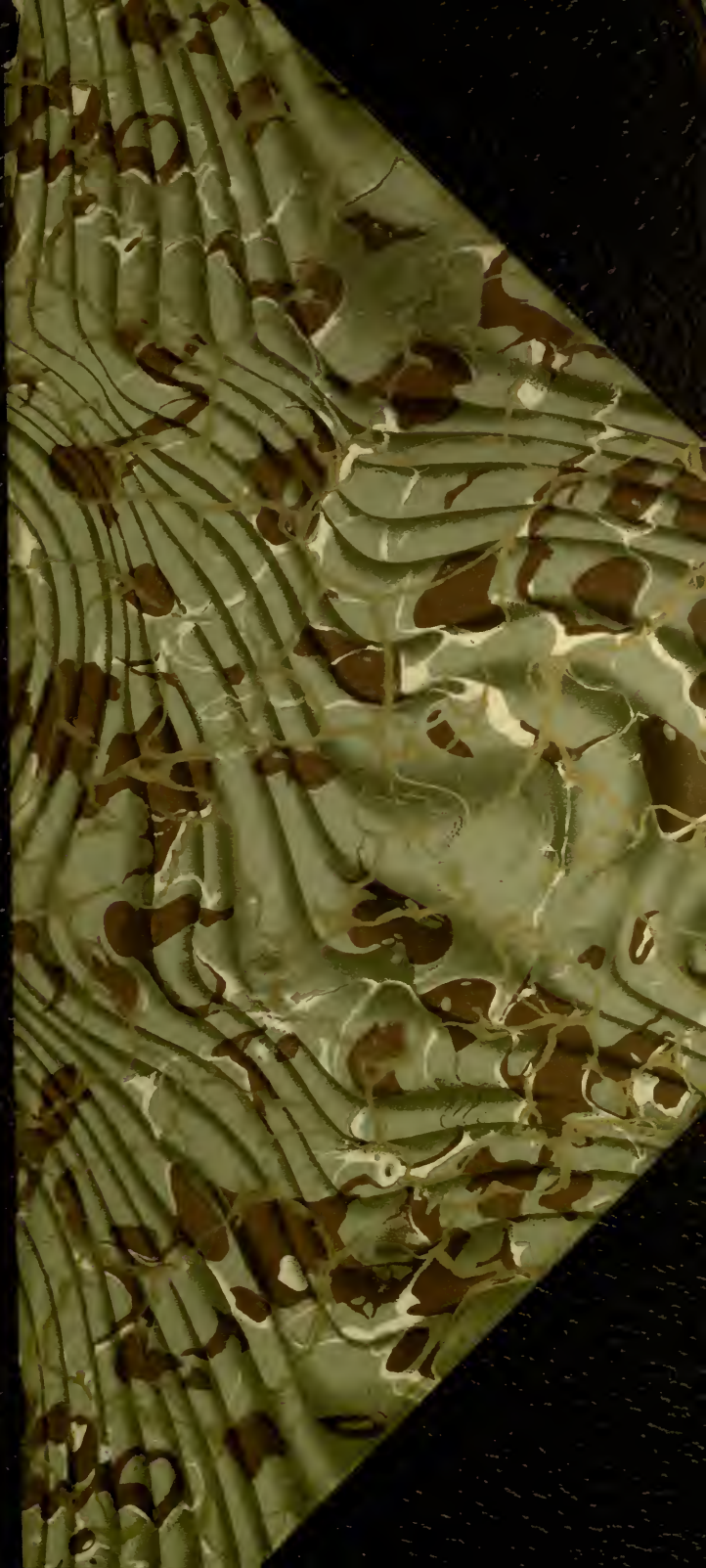

I am a heritage because I bring you years of thought and the lore of time — I impart yet I can not speak — I have traveled among the peoples of the earth — I am a rover — Oft-times I stray from the fireside of the one who loves and cherishes me - who misses me when I am gone — Should you find me vagrant please send me home - among my brothers - on the book shelves of .....

ALFRED SANTELL

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"O, POMPEY, AT THY SACRED KNEES
WE SWEAR"

FORTY-THREE VOLUMES

[illegible]

VOLUME XIX

AKRON, OHIO
THE WERNER COMPANY
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EDITION DE LA PACIFICATION

THE WORKS OF

VOLTAIRE

A CONTEMPORARY VERSION

With Notes by Tobias Smollett, Revised and Modernized
New Translations by William F. Fleming, and an
Introduction by Oliver H. G. Leigh

A CRITIQUE AND BIOGRAPHY
BY
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VOLUME XIX

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THE DRAMATIC WORKS

OF

VOLTAIRE

IN FIVE VOLUMES

VOL. V

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ZAÏRE

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

OSMAN, Sultan of Jerusalem.

LUSIGNAN, A Prince of the Blood of the ancient Kings of Jerusalem.

ZAÏRE, FATIMA, } Slaves of the Sultan.

NERESTAN, CHATILLON, } French Gentlemen.

ORASMIN, MELIDOR, } Officers of the Sultan.

A SLAVE.

ATTENDANTS.

SCENE, the Seraglio at Jerusalem.

"*Zaïre*" was written and produced in 1732. During its composition Voltaire wrote to a friend: "Everyone here reproaches me that I do not put more love into my pieces. There shall be love enough this time, I swear, and not mere gallantry. My desire is that there may be nothing so Turkish, so Christian, so amorous, so tender, so infuriate, as that which I am now putting into verse for the pleasure of the public. . . . The names of Montmorenci, Saladire, Jesus, Mahomet, will be in it. There will be mention of the Seine and Jordan, of Paris and Jerusalem. We shall love, we shall baptize, we shall kill, and I will send you the outline as soon as it is done." The piece was a great success, despite J. B. Rousseau's adverse criticism. It was played at Berlin, and Geneva; and at Rome on the hundredth anniversary of Voltaire's death.

ZAÏRE.

An Epistle Dedicatory to Mr. Falkener, an English Merchant, Since Ambassador at Constantinople, with the Tragedy of Zaïre.

You, my dear friend, are an Englishman, and I am a native of France; but lovers of the fine arts are fellow-citizens: men of taste and virtue have pretty nearly the same principles in every country, and form one general commonweal: it is no longer, therefore, matter of astonishment to see a French tragedy dedicated to an Englishman, or an Italian, any more than it would have been, in the days of antiquity, for a citizen of Ephesus, or of Athens, to address his performance to a Grecian of some other city; I lay this tragedy before you, therefore, as my countryman in literature, and my most intimate friend.

I shall, at the same time, have the pleasure of informing my brother Frenchmen here in what light traders are looked upon among you, what regard the English have for a profession so essential to the welfare of their kingdom, and the honor which they have to represent their country in parliament, in the rank of legislators; though trade is despised by our petits-maitres, who, you know as well as myself, both in England and France, are the most contemptible species of being that crawl upon the face of the earth.

My further inducement to correspond with an Englishman, rather than any other man, on subjects of literature, arises from your happy freedom of

thought, which never fails to inspire me with bolder ideas, and also with more nervous expression.[1] 'Whoever converses with me has, for the time at least, my heart at his disposal; if his sentiments are lively and animated, he inflames me: if he is strong and nervous, he raises and supports me: the courtier, who is all dissimulation, makes me insensibly as affected and constrained in my behavior as himself; but a bold and fearless spirit gives me sentiment and courage: I catch fire from him, just as young painters, brought up under Lemoine or Argilière, catch the freedom of their masters' pencils, and compose with their spirit: thus Virgil admired Homer, followed his steps, and, without being a plagiarist, became his rival.'

You need not be apprehensive of my sending you, with this piece, a long apology and vindication of it: I might indeed have told you why I did not make *Zaïre* more determined to embrace Christianity before she knew her father; why she keeps the secret from her lover; but those who have any judgment, or any justice, will see my reasons without my pointing them out; and as for those critics that are predetermined not to believe me, it would be lost labor to give them any reasons at all.

All I can boast of is that the piece is tolerably simple; a perfection, in my opinion, that is not to be despised.

---

[1] The passages marked thus ' ' are, in the original, written in a familiar kind of verse, consisting of eight syllables, which M. Voltaire is, in most of his letters, fond of intermingling with his prose: the reader will easily perceive that, however agreeable those rhymes might be to a French ear, both the subject and style, in the greater part of them, are of such a nature, as not to admit of poetical translation into English.

'This happy simplicity was one of the distinguishing beauties of learned antiquity: it is a pity you Englishmen don't introduce this novelty on your stage, which is so filled with horror, gibbets, and murders: put more truth into your dramatic performances, and more noble images: Addison has endeavored to do it: he was the poet of the wife, but he was too stiff: and, in his boasted "Cato," the two girls are really very insipid characters: imitate from the great Addison only what is good; polish a little the rude manners of your mild muse; write for all times, and all ages, for fame, and for posterity, and transfuse into your works the simplicity of your manners.'

But I would not have your English poets imagine that I mean to give them *"Zaire"* as a model: I preach simplicity to them, and easy numbers, but I would not be thought to set up for the saint of my own sermon: if *"Zaire"* has met with success, I owe it not so much to the merit of the performance, as to the tenderness of the love scenes, which I was wise enough to execute as well as I possibly could: in this I flattered the taste of my audience; and he is generally sure to succeed, who talks more to the passions of men than to their reason: if we are ever so good Christians, we must have a little love besides: and I am satisfied the great Corneille was much in the right of it, not to confine himself, in his *"Polyeucte,"* merely to the breaking of the statues of Jupiter by the new converts: for such is the depravity of human kind, that perhaps 'the pious soul of *Polyeucte* would have but little impression on the audience, and even the Christian verses he declaims would have been received with contempt, if it had not been for his wife's passion for her favorite heathen, who was

certainly more worthy of her love than the good devotee her husband.'

Almost the same accident happened to *Zaire;* my friends, who frequent the theatre, assured me, that if she had been only converted, she would not have been half so interesting: but she was in love with the most perfect religion in the world, and that has made her fortune. I could not, however, expect to escape censure.

'Many an inexorable critic has carped at and slashed me, and many a remorseless jester has pretended that I only filched an improbable Romance, which I had not the sense to improve; that I have lamed and spoiled the subject; that the catastrophe is unnatural: they even prognosticated the dreadful hiss with which a disgusted public salutes a miserable poet: but I despised their censures, and risked my play upon the stage; the public was more favorable than they expected, or I deserved: instead of hisses, it received shouts: tears flowed from almost every eye: but I am not puffed up with my success, I assure you I am no stranger to all its faults. I know very well it is absolutely indisputable, that before we can make a perfect work, we must sell ourselves to the devil, which was what I did not choose to do.'

I do not flatter myself that the English will do "*Zaire*" the same honor they have done to "*Brutus,*" a translation of which has been played at London:[1] they tell us here, that you have neither devotion enough to be affected by old *Lusignan,* nor tenderness to feel for *Zaire;* you love a conspiracy better than an intrigue; upon your stage, they say the word

[1] Voltaire was mistaken in this particular, as no translation of his Brutus was ever exhibited on the English stage.

"country" is sure of getting a clap, and so is "love" upon ours; but to say the truth, you have as much love in your tragedies as we have: if you have not the reputation of being tender, it is not that your stage heroes are not in love, but that they seldom express their passion naturally: our lovers talk like lovers; yours like poets.

But if the French are your superiors in gallantry, there are many things, which, in return, we may borrow of you: to the English theatre I am indebted for the liberty which I have taken of bringing the names of our kings and ancient families upon the stage: a novelty of this kind may perhaps be the means of introducing amongst us a species of tragedy hitherto unknown, and which we seem to want. Some happy geniuses will, I have no doubt, rise up, who will bring to perfection that idea, of which "*Zaire*" is but a slight sketch: as long as literature meets with protection in France, we shall always have writers enough; nature every day forms men of talents and abilities; we have nothing to do but to encourage and employ them: but if those which distinguish themselves are not supported by some honorable recompense, and by the still more pleasing charm of admiration, all the fine arts must soon perish, even though so many edifices have been raised to shelter and protect them: the noble plantation of Louis XIV. would die away for want of culture: the public might still have taste, but there would be no eminent masters: the sculptor in his academy would see a number of indifferent pupils about him, but never have the ambition to imitate *Girardon* and *Pujet:* the painter would rest satisfied with excelling his contemporaries, but would never think of rivalling *Poussin:* may the successor of Louis

XIV. always follow the example of that great monarch, who inspired every artist with emulation, encouraged at the same time a *Racine* and a *Van-Robais:* he carried our commerce and our glory to the farthest part of the globe, and extended his bounty to foreigners of all nations, who were astonished at the fame and rewards which our court bestowed upon them: wherever merit appeared, it found a patron in Louis XIV.

> Where'er that bounteous star its influence shed,
> Fair merit raised her long-declining head;
> His royal hand spread honors, wealth, and fame,
> Then Viviani, then Cassini came:
> Newton refused a gift from France's throne,
> Or Newton too, thou knowest, had been our own:
> These are the deeds that raise our Gallia's fame,
> These, Louis, will immortalize thy name,
> And truly make thee, what thou wert designed,
> The universal monarch of mankind.

You have no foundations equal to the munificent donations of our kings; but then your people supplies the want of them: you do not stand in need of royal favor to honor and reward superior talents of every kind. Steel and Vanbrugh were comedy writers, and at the same time members of parliament: the primacy given to Dr. Tillotson, Newton honored with an important trust, Prior made an ambassador, and Addison a minister of state, are but the common and ordinary consequences of the regard which you pay to merit, and to great men: you heap riches on them while they live, and erect monuments and statues to them after their death: even your celebrated actresses have places in your churches, near the great poets.

'Your Oldfield, and her predecessor, Bracegirdle, in consideration of their having been so agreeable to the public when in their prime, their course fin-

ished, were, by the consent of your whole nation, honored with a pompous funeral, and their remains carried under a velvet pall, and lodged in your church with the greatest magnificence: their spirits, no doubt, are still proud of it, and boast of the honor in the shades below; while the divine Molière, who was far more worthy of it, could scarcely obtain leave to sleep in a churchyard; and the amiable Lecouvreur, whose eyes I closed, could not even so much as obtain two wax-tapers and a coffin; M. de Laubiniere, out of charity, carried away her corpse by night in a hackney-coach to the banks of the river; do you not even now see the god of love breaking his arrows in a rage, and *Melopomene* in tears, banishing herself from that ungrateful place which Lecouvreur had so long adorned?

But everything, in these our days, conspires to reduce France to that state of barbarism from which Louis XIV. and Cardinal Richelieu had delivered her: that a curse on that policy knows not the value of the fine arts! the world is peopled with nations as powerful as our own; how happens it then that we look on them with so little esteem? For the same reason perhaps that we despise the company of a rich man, whose mind is tasteless and uncultivated. Do not imagine that this empire of wit, this glory of being the universal model for mankind, is a trifling distinction, it is the infallible mark of the grandeur of a kingdom: under the greatest princes the arts have always flourished, and their decay is often succeeded by that of the state itself: history will supply us with ample proofs of it; but this would lead me too far out of my subject: I shall finish this letter, which is already too long, with a little performance, which naturally demands a place

at the head of this tragedy: an epistle, in verse, to the actress who played the part of *Zaire*; I owe her at least this compliment for the manner in which she acquitted herself on that occasion.

'For the prophet of Mecca never had Greek nor Arabian in his seraglio so beautiful or so genteel: her black eyes, so finely arched and full of tenderness, with her excellent voice, mien and carriage, defended my performance against every auditor that had a mind to be troublesome: but when the reader catches me in his closet, all my honor, I fear, will be lost.'

Adieu, my dear friend, continue to cultivate philosophy and the *Belles-lettres,* without forgetting to send your ships to the Levant.

I have the honor to remain, &c.

VOLTAIRE.

A SECOND LETTER TO MR. FALKENER, THEN AMBASSADOR TO CONSTANTINOPLE.

From the Second Edition of the Tragedy of *Zaire.*

My dear friend,

For your new dignity of ambassador only makes our friendship more respectable, and shall not prevent my making use of a title even more sacred than that of minister; the name of "Friend" is much above that of, "your Excellency." I now dedicate to the ambassador of a great king and a free nation what I had before addressed to a plain citizen, and an English merchant: those who know how much commerce is respected in your country must know that a tradesman is there sometimes a legislator, a good officer, and a public minister.

Some ridiculous people who had fallen in with the fashion of paying respect to nothing but nobility, thought proper to laugh at the novelty of a dedication to a man who had nothing but merit to recommend him: who took the liberty, on a stage sacred to calumny and bad taste, to insult the author of that dedication, and to reproach the gentleman to whom it was addressed for being a merchant:[1] but we must not, sir, impute to our whole nation an affront so gross and illiberal, that people, ever so uncivilized, would have been ashamed to commit. The magistrates of our police, who are constantly employed in rectifying abuses of this kind, were, to the last degree, surprised at it: but the contempt and ignominy with which the public have branded the acknowledged author of this indignity, are, I hope, a fresh proof of French politeness: those virtues, which form the character of a whole people, are often contradicted, and, as it were, called in question by the vices of an individual: there were some voluptuaries, we know, even at Lacedæmon: there have been low and foolish fellows in England; men without taste, or good breeding, at Athens; and so there are in Paris.

You will, I hope, forget them, sir, as they are forgotten by the world, and receive this second mark of my respect: they are due to you still more than they were before, as this tragedy has made its appearance at London. It has been translated, and acted with so much success, and the author of it

[1] Mr. Falkner, and some other gentlemen of character, were affronted at the Theatre Italienne at Paris, by some injurious reflections thrown out upon them in a contemptible farce exhibited there, which was hissed by the audience.

spoken of with so much regard and politeness, that I ought to return my public thanks to the whole nation.

I do not know how to acquit my obligations to you by any other means than acquainting my countrymen here with the particulars of the translation, and representation of "*Zaire*" on the English stage.

Mr. Hill, a man of letters, and one who seems to understand the theatre better than any English author, did me the honor to translate this piece, with the design of introducing something new on your stage, both with regard to the manner of writing tragedies, and of repeating them. I shall speak, by and by, of the representation.

The art of declaiming was for a long time among you entirely unnatural; most of your tragic actors expressed themselves more like poets seized with rapturous enthusiasm than like men inspired by a real passion. Several of your comedians were even more intolerable; they roared out their verses with an impetuous fury that was no more like the natural tone than convulsions and distortions are to an easy and noble carriage. This air of riot and tumult seemed entirely foreign to your nation, which is naturally sober and grave, even to such a degree, as frequently to appear cold and unanimated in the eye of a stranger. Your preachers never indulge themselves in a declamatory tone, and you would laugh at a pleader at the bar, who should work himself up into a passion: the players were the only outrageous set of people in the kingdom. Our actors and actresses also, particularly the latter, were guilty of this for many years. M. Lecouvreur was the first who broke them of it: thus an Italian writer, a man of great sense and parts, speaks of her:

La legiadra Couvreur sola non trotta
Per quella strade dove i suoi compagni
Van di galoppo tutti quanti in frotta,
Se auvien ch'ella pianga, o che si lagni
Senza quelli urli spaventosi loro
Ti muove si che in pianger l'accompagni.

The same change which Lecouvreur affected on our stage, Mrs. Cibber brought about on yours, in the part of *Zaire:* how astonishing it is that in every art it should be so long before we arrive at the simple and the natural!

A novelty that must appear still more extraordinary to a Frenchman is, that a gentleman of your country, a man of rank and fortune, should condescend to play the part of Osman. It was an interesting circumstance to see the two principal characters represented, one by a person of condition, and the other by a young actress not above eighteen years of age, who had never repeated a line before in her life. This instance of a gentleman's exercising his talents for declamation, is not singular among you; it is perhaps more surprising that we should wonder at it: we ought certainly to reflect, that everything in this world depends upon custom and opinion: the court of France have danced on the stage with the actors of the opera, and we thought there was nothing strange in it, but that the fashion of this kind of entertainment should be discontinued. Why should it be more extraordinary for people to write than to dance in public? is there any difference between these two arts, except that the one is as much above the other as the perfections of the mind are superior to those of the body; I have said it before, and I say so still, none of the polite arts are contemptible; and to be ashamed of talents of any kind is of all things the most shameful.

I come now to the translation of "*Zaïre,*" and the change which has been made among you with regard to the drama.

You had a strange custom, which even Mr. Addison, the chastest of your writers, adopted, so often does custom get the better of sense and reason; I mean, the ridiculous custom of finishing every act by verses in a different taste from the rest of the piece, which verse usually consisted of a simile. *Phœdra,* as she leaves the stage, compares herself to a bitch; *Cato* to a rock, and *Cleopatra* to children that cry themselves asleep. The translator of "*Zaïre*" was the first who dared to maintain the rights of nature against a custom so directly opposite to her. He proscribed this custom, well knowing that passion should always speak its own language, and that the poet should disappear, to make room for the hero.

Upon this principle he has translated plainly, and without any unnecessary ornaments, all the simple verses of the piece, which must have been entirely spoiled by an endeavor to render them beautiful, such as;

On ne peut désirer ce qu'on ne connoît pas.

J'eusse été prés du Gange esclave des faux dieux
Chrétienne dans Paris, Musulmane en ces lie ux.

Mais Orosmane m'aime, & j'ai tout oublié

Non, la reconnoissance est un foible retour
Un tribut offensant, trop peu fait pour l'amour.

Je me croirois haï d'être aimé foiblement.

Je veux avec excès vous aimer & vous plaire

L'art n'est pas fait pour toi, tu n'en a pas besoin,

L'art le plus innocent tient de la perfidie.

All the verses that are in this fine taste of simplicity, are rendered word for word into English: they might very easily have been adorned, but the translator judged in a different manner from several of my countrymen; he liked the verses, and retained therefore all the simplicity of them; the style indeed ought always to be agreeable to the subject; *"Alzira," "Brutus,"* and *"Zaïre,"* for example, required three different kinds of versification: if *Berenice* complained of *Titus,* and *Ariadne* of *Theseus,* in the style of *"Cinna,"* neither *Berenice* nor *Ariadne* would please or affect us; we can never talk well of love, if we search after any other ornaments but truth and simplicity.

This is not the place to examine whether it be right or wrong to put so much love into our dramatic performances: I will even allow it to be a fault, but it is a fault which will always be universal; nor do I know what name to give that fault, which is the delight of all mankind: of one thing I am satisfied, that the French have succeeded better in it than all other nations, ancient and modern, put together: love appears on our stage with more decorum, more delicacy, and truth than we meet with on any other; and the reason is, because of all nations the French are best acquainted with society: the perpetual commerce and intercourse of the two sexes, carried on with so much vivacity and good breeding, has introduced among us a politeness unknown to all the world but ourselves.

Society principally depends on the fair sex: all those nations who are so unhappy as to confine their women are unsociable: the austerity of your manners, your political quarrels, and religious wars, that rendered you savage and barbarous, deprived

you, even down to the age of Charles II. of the pleasures of society, even in the bosom of liberty: the poets, therefore, neither of your country, nor of any other, knew anything of the manner in which love ought to be treated.

Good comedy was utterly unknown amongst us till the days of Molière; as was the art of expressing our sentiments with delicacy till those of Racine, because society had not attained to any degree of perfection before that time: a poet cannot paint in his closet, manners which he has never seen; and would sooner write a hundred odes and epistles than one scene where nature must speak: your Dryden, who was in other respects a great genius, put into the mouth of his heroes in love either high-flown strains of rhetorical flourish, or something indecent, two things equally opposite to tenderness.

If Mr. Racine makes *Titus* say:

Depuis cinq ans entiers chaque jour je la vois
Et croi toujours la voir pour la première fois.

Your Dryden makes *Antony* say:

——how I loved,
Witness ye days and nights, and all ye hours,
That danced away with down upon your feet,
As all your business were to count my love,
One day passed by, and nothing saw but love;
Another came, and still 'twas only love:
The suns were wearied out with looking on,
And I untired with loving——

It is very difficult to conceive that *Antony* should ever really talk thus to *Cleopatra.* In the same play, *Cleopatra* speaks thus to *Antony:*

Come to me, come my soldier, to my arms,
You've been too long away from my embraces;
But when I have you fast, and all my own,
With broken murmurs, and with amorous sighs,
I'll say, you were unkind, and punish you,
And mark you red with many an eager kiss.

It is not improbable that *Cleopatra* might frequently talk thus, but indecencies of this kind are not to be represented before a respectable audience: some of your countrymen may perhaps say this is pure nature; but we may tell them in answer, that if it be so, it is that nature which ought carefully to be concealed: it shows but little knowledge of human nature, to imagine that we can please the more by presenting these licentious images; on the contrary, it is shutting up the avenues to true pleasure: where everything is at once discovered, we are disgusted; there remains no more to look for or desire; and in our pursuit of pleasure we meet with languor and satiety: this is the reason why those who are truly qualified for society, taste pleasures far more exquisite than grosser appetites can have any idea of: the spectators, in this case, are like lovers who are satiated by too quick possession; those ideas which, when brought too close, would make us blush, should be seen, as it were, through a cloud. It is this veil to which, to a right mind, they are indebted for all their charms: there is no pleasure without decorum.[1] The French are certainly better acquainted with this than any other nation upon earth; not because they are without genius and spirit, as the unequal and impetuous Dryden has ridiculously asserted; but because, ever since the regency of Anne of Austria, they have been the most sociable and the most polished people in the universe: and this politeness is not an arbitrary thing, like what they

[1] There is no expression in the English language which fully comprehends the meaning of the French word *bienséance,* which, notwithstanding, unfortunately for a translator, being a favorite phrase, recurs in almost every page: as does also the word *naivete,* for which we have no terms in all respects corresponding to it.

call civility, but a law of nature, which they have happily cultivated far beyond any other nation.

The translation of *Zaire* has, almost throughout his whole piece, strictly observed those decencies of the stage which are common to us both; but there are, at the same time, some places where he has entirely adhered to ancient customs.

For instance, when in the English piece *Osman* comes to tell *Zaire* that he can no longer love her, she answers him by rolling upon the ground: the Sultan is not moved at seeing her in this ridiculous posture of despair, and yet the moment after is astonished at *Zaire's* weeping, and cries out, "*Zaire,* thou weepest." He should have said to her before; "*Zaire,* thou rollest upon the ground."

Insomuch that those three words, "*Zaire, thou weepest,*" which have so fine an effect on our stage, have none on yours, because they were displaced: those familiar and simple expressions derive all their power from the manner in which they are introduced. "My lord, you change countenance," is nothing of itself: but when these words are pronounced by *Mithridates,* we shudder at them.

To say nothing but what we ought to say, and that in the manner in which it ought to be said, is a point of perfection which the French have come nigher to than the writers, myself excepted, of other countries: on this subject we have, I think, a right to dictate to them: you can teach us perhaps greater and more useful things, we ought to acknowledge it. The French, who have written against Sir Isaac Newton's discoveries, with regard to light and colors, are ashamed of it; those who oppose his system of gravitation will soon be still more so.

You ought to submit to our rules of the stage, as

we submit to your philosophy: we have made as good experiments on the human heart, as you have in physics: the art of pleasing seems to be the art of Frenchmen; the art of thinking is all your own. Happy are those, sir, who like you, can unite them.

I am, sir, &c.,

VOLTAIRE.

ZAÏRE.

ACT I. SCENE I.

ZAÏRE, FATIMA.

FATIMA.

I little thought to see the lovely Zaïre,
In all the pride of youth and beauty, thus
Calm and resigned submitting to her fate:
What sweet delusive hope hath pierced the cloud
Of grief that hung upon thee, and revived
Thy drooping heart? this peace of mind hath given
New lustre to thy charms: no longer now
Thy eyes are bathed in tears, no longer seek
Those blissful climes where brave Nerestan promised
To guide our steps; thou talkest not, as of late
We heard thee, of those seats of happiness
Where women reign, by willing slaves adored,
The queens, the idols of a polished people,
Though free yet chaste, and wise though unrestrained,
For social converse fit, and not to fear
Indebted for their virtue: sighest thou, Zaïre,
No more for this gay land of liberty?
Seest thou within these solitary walls
Aught that is lovely? is the name of slave
So grateful now, that to the banks of Seine
Thou wouldst prefer the gloomy Solyma?

ZAÏRE.

We cannot wish for joys we never knew:

'Twas heaven's supreme degree to fix us here;
Custom hath made restraint familiar to me:
I look not now beyond the narrow bounds
Of this seraglio; every hour it grows
More pleasing to me, and the world beside
Is lost to Zaïre: to the noble Osman
I yield myself, to live beneath his power;
To honor and obey my royal master
Is my soul's utmost hope, and its ambition,
All else is but a dream.

FATIMA.

Hast thou forgot
The kind Nerestan, he whose generous friendship
Promised so oft to free us from the yoke
Of bondage? how did we admire his virtues,
His matchless valor, and intrepid zeal!
The glory he acquired beneath the walls
Of Damas, where so many Christians fell
By Osman's mighty hand! the conqueror then,
Thou mayest remember, pitied his brave foe,
And, on his word, permitted him to leave
The banks of Jordan; we expect him still
To pay the ransom of our liberty,
And set us free: must all our hopes be vain?

ZAÏRE.

Perhaps his promise might exceed his power;
Two years are past, and yet he's not returned:
Alas! my Fatima, a captive stranger,
To gain his liberty, might promise more
Than he could e'er perform: he talked, thou knowest,
Of bringing ransom for ten Christian slaves,
Would break their fetters, or resume his own:

I was too credulous, and much admired
His forward zeal, but I shall think no more on it.

FATIMA.

If yet he should be faithful, and return
To keep his plighted faith, then wouldst thou not—

ZAÏRE.

It is not as it was, my Fatima,
The time is past.

FATIMA.

What sayest thou?

ZAÏRE.

I'll not hide
The secret from my friend; perhaps the Sultan
May yet conceal it, but thy Zaïre's heart
With safety may repose on Fatima:
Know then, some three months since, when thou wert absent,
Removed with other slaves from Jordan's banks,
Kind heaven, to put a period to our woes,
Raised up a powerful friend—the mighty Osman—

FATIMA.

Well, what of Osman?

ZAÏRE.

He, the Sultan's self,
The Christian's haughty conqueror, is the slave
Of Zaïre; yes, he loves me, Fatima;
Nay, blush not, (for I understand thee well)
Think not I mean to stain my spotless honor,
Or stoop to be the mistress of a tyrant;
That I will ever hazard the quick change
Of transitory passion; no, my friend,

I am not so far lost to modesty,
And native pride, as to forget myself;
Rather than fall so low I would embrace
The milder fate of slavery and death;
But I shall more astonish thee: for know,
I have subdued his haughty soul to love
Most pure, and most refined: amidst the crowd
Of rival beauties that contend for Osman,
I, I alone have fixed his wandering heart,
And Hymen soon, in spite of all their deep
And dark intrigues, shall make the Sultan mine

FATIMA.

It is a conquest worthy of thy charms,
And of thy virtues: I am much surprised,
But more delighted; may thy happiness
Be perfect! I shall rank myself with joy
Amongst thy subjects.

ZAÏRE.

Be my equal still,
And share my fortune; royalty with thee
Divided will make Zaïre doubly happy.

FATIMA.

Pleased with thy choice, long may indulgent heaven
Smile on thy nuptial bed; may never grief
Intrude to poison the sweet cup of grandeur,
By us called happiness! alas, how little
Doth it deserve the name! but tell me, Zaïre,
Art thou at ease, and feelest thou naught within
To check thy joys? hast thou forgot that once
Thou wert a Christian?

ZAÏRE.

Ha! what sayest thou? why
Wouldst thou recall my sorrows, Fatima?

Alas! I know not who or what I am,
Not even who gave me birth.

FATIMA.

Nerestan oft
Hath said, thou wert the daughter of a Christian;
The cross, which in thy infant years adorned thee,
Confirms it; still that sacred pledge remains
Perhaps but to remind thee of the faith
Which thou hast quitted.

ZAÏRE.

I've no other proof;
Shall that alone persuade me to embrace
A faith detested by the man I love?
Our thoughts, our manners, our religion, all
Are formed by custom, and the powerful bent
Of early years: born on the banks of Ganges
Zaïre had worshipped Pagan deities;
At Paris I had been a Christian; here
I am a happy Mussulman: we know
But what we learn; the instructing parent's hand
Graves in our feeble hearts those characters
Which time retouches, and examples fix
So deeply in the mind, that naught but God
Can e'er efface: but thou wert hither brought
A captive at an age when reason joined
To sage experience had informed thy soul,
And well-confirmed its faith: for me, a slave
Even from my cradle to the Saracens,
Too late the Christian light broke in upon me;
Yet far from wishing ill to laws so pure,
Spite of myself, I own to thee, that cross,
Whene'er I looked upon it, filled my soul
With reverential awe, and oft in secret
Have I invoked its holy aid, ere Osman

Possessed my heart: thine is a noble faith;
I honor much those charitable laws
Which old Nerestan many a time hath told me
Would wipe off every tear, and make mankind
One sweet united family of love:
A Christian must be happy.

FATIMA.

Wherefore then
Wouldst thou become their most inveterate foe,
And wed their proud oppressor?

ZAÏRE.

Wouldst thou have me
Refuse so fair a present as the heart
Of Osman? no: I will confess my weakness;
But for the Sultan, Zaïre had long since
Embraced thy faith, and been, like thee, a Christian:
But Osman loves me, and 'tis all forgotten:
My every thought, my every hope is fixed
On him alone, and my enraptured soul
Can dwell on naught but Osman: O, my friend,
Think on his lovely form, and graceful mind,
His noble deeds, his glory, and renown:
The crown he offers is not worth my care;
The poor return of gratitude would ill
Repay his passion; love would spurn the gift:
'Tis not to Osman's throne, but Osman's self,
That I aspire; perhaps I am to blame;
But trust me, Fatima, if heaven had doomed him
To Zaïre's fate, if he were now, like me,
A wretched slave, and I on Syria's throne,
Or love deceives me much, or I should stoop
With joy, and raise him up to me and empire.

FATIMA.

But hark, they come this way; perhaps 'tis Osman.

ZAÏRE.

It is; it must be he; my fluttering heart
Speaks his arrival; for these two long days
He hath been absent, but propitious love
Restores him to my wishes.

SCENE II.

OSMAN, ZAÏRE, FATIMA.

OSMAN.

Virtuous Zaïre,
Ere Hymen join our hands, permit me here
To pour forth all my honest heart before you:
I follow not our eastern monarchs' laws,
Nor act by their example; well I know
How wide a field is left by Mahomet
For luxury to range in, that at pleasure
I might command a crowd of kneeling slaves,
Receive their incense, and return their love;
From the Seraglio's peaceful seats deal forth
My laws, and in the arms of indolence
Govern my kingdom; but that well I know
How sloth deludes us, tempting are her charms,
But fatal is their end: a hundred kings
Have I beheld, her tributary slaves,
Our prophet's most unworthy successors,
Caliphs that trembled midst the splendid pomp
Of visionary power, and only held
The name of kings, who might have lived the lords
Of all mankind, the conquerors of the world,

Had they but been, like their great ancestors,
The masters of themselves: then Solyma
And Syria fell beneath the valiant Bouillon,
But heaven, to chastise the impious foe,
Upraised the arm of mighty Saladin:
My father conquered Jordan, and to him,
Unequal to the weight of empire, next
Succeeded Osman, the disputed lord
Of a weak kingdom: whilst the haughty Christians,
Thirsting for blood, thick from the western coast,
Pour in upon me; whilst the voice of war,
And the shrill trumpet heard on every side,
Call us to arms, shall Osman waste his hours
In the loose dalliance of a soft seraglio?
No, Zaïre, love, and glory, bear me witness,
To thee alone I swear eternal truth,
To take thee for my mistress, and my wife;
To live thy friend, thy lover, and thy husband;
Zaïre alone shall with the toils of war
Divide my heart: think not I mean to trust
Thy honor to our savage Asian guards,
Those shameless pandars to the lawless pleasures
Of their imperious masters; I esteem
As well as love thee, and to Zaïre's self
Its fittest guard, commit my Zaïre's virtue.
Thou knowest my heart, on thee alone thou seest
Osman has placed his hopes of happiness;
I need not add how wretched it would make
My future life, shouldst thou repay my fondness
With the poor cold return of gratitude;
I love thee, Zaïre, yes, with rapture love thee,
And hope to find in thee an equal claim:
I own, whate'er the heart of Osman seeks,
It seeks with ardor; I should think you hated,
Did you not love me, with excess of passion:

Such is my nature; if it suits with thine,
I am thy husband, but on this condition,
And only this, if marriage did not make
Thee happy, I were most supremely wretched.

ZAÏRE.

Wretched, my lord? O if thy happiness
Depends on Zaïre's truth, and Zaïre's love,
Never was mortal half so blest as Osman.
Yes; the fond lover, and the tender wife,
All thou canst wish for, shalt thou find in Zaïre,
For thou hast raised her far above her sex,
Above her hopes; O what excess of bliss
To hold my life, my happiness from thee,
Such envied bounties from the man I love,
To be the work of thy creating hand!
But if among the crowd of rival hearts
Thy partial favor has selected Zaïre's,
O if thy choice———

SCENE III.

OSMAN, ZAÏRE, FATIMA, ORASMIN.

ORASMIN.

My lord, that Christian slave,
Who, on his promise given, had thy permission
To visit France, is thence returned, and begs
An audience.

OSMAN.

Let him enter.

FATIMA.

Gracious heaven!

OSMAN.

Why comes he not?

ORASMIN.

My lord, he waits without;
I did not think a Christian might approach
Your royal presence in this sacred place.

OSMAN.

In every place access is free to Osman;
I hate our eastern policy, that hides
Its tyrants from the public eye, to screen
Oppression: give him entrance.

SCENE IV.

OSMAN, ZAÏRE, FATIMA, ORASMIN, NERESTAN.

NERESTAN.

Generous Sultan,
Whose virtues even thy Christian foes admire,
I come, as bound in honor, to discharge
My vows, and bring with me the promised ransom
Of beauteous Zaïre, the fair Selima,
And ten more Christian prisoners; I have done
My duty to the captives, do thou thine,
And set them free; I have bestowed on them
My little all, and naught remains for me
But noble poverty; Nerestan still
Must be thy slave; I have preserved my honor,
Unblemished, and fulfilled my sacred word.

OSMAN.

Christian, thy virtue merits my best praise;
But think not Osman e'er will be surpassed

In generosity; receive thy freedom,
Take back thy treasures; take my bounty with them;
I promised thee ten Christian slaves, I'll give thee
A hundred more, demand them when thou wilt;
Let them depart, and teach their countrymen,
That even in Syria's plains some virtues dwell;
Thence let them judge, if they or Osman best
Deserve to reign in Solyma; but know,
Old Lusignan must still remain a captive;
It were not safe to give him liberty;
Sprung from the royal blood of France, he claims
A right to govern here, and that alone
Condemns him to perpetual slavery,
To groan in chains, and never more behold
The light of day: I pity him, and yet
It must be so; cruel necessity
Compels me to this rigor: and for Zaïre,
She must remain with me; not all thy gold
Can purchase her; not the whole race of Christians,
With all their kings, shall ever force her from me:
You may depart.

FATIMA.

What do I hear?

NERESTAN.

My lord,
She is a Christian born; I have your word,
Your honor, and her own, that she should go
When I returned: poor Lusignan! could he
Offend thee? wherefore wouldst thou——

OSMAN.

Christian, hence:
It is my will; therefore no more: thy pride
Offends me; go, and ere to-morrow's sun
Shines on this palace, leave my kingdom.

FATIMA.

Heaven
Assist us now!

OSMAN.

Go, Zaïre, and assume
Thy empire o'er my palace; there command
As my Sultana; I will hence, and give
My orders for our nuptials.

SCENE V.

OSMAN, ORASMIN.

OSMAN.

Didst thou mark,
Orasmin, that presumptuous slave; he sighed,
And fixed his eyes upon her.

ORASMIN.

O my lord,
Beware of jealousy.

OSMAN.

Ha! jealous, sayest thou?
Thinkest thou the pride of Osman will descend
So low! to love as if I hated her?
Suspicion but provokes the crime it fears;
Zaïre is truth itself; and O Orasmin
I love her to idolatry; if e'er
I could be jealous—if my foolish heart—
But I will think no more on it; let my soul
Dwell on the sweet idea of her charms:
Haste, my Orasmin, and get all things ready
For the dear happy moment that unites
Thy sovereign to the object of his wishes:

One hour I will devote to public cares,
The rest shall all be given to love and Zaïre.

End of the First Act.

ACT II. SCENE I.

NERESTAN, CHATILLON.

CHATILLON.

Joy to our great deliverer, the brave,
The generous Nerestan, sent by heaven
To save thy fellow Christians! O come forth,
Appear amongst us, and receive the tribute
Due to thy virtues; let the happy few,
Whom thou has blest with freedom, clasp thy knees,
And kiss thy gracious hand: they crowd to see
Their benefactor, do not hide thyself
From their desiring eyes, but let us all
United———

NERESTAN.

O Chatillon, talk not thus
Of my deservings, I have done no more
Than was my duty; circumstanced like me,
Like me thou wouldst have acted.

CHATILLON.

Every Christian
Should sacrifice himself to his religion:
To leave our own, and think on other's good,
Is our first happiness; how blest art thou,
By gracious heaven appointed to perform
This noble duty! but, for us, the sport
Of cruel fortune, slaves in Solyma,
By Osman's father left in chains, and long

Forgotten, here for life we had remained
In sad captivity, nor e'er beheld
Our native land, had not thy generous aid
Stepped in to save us.

NERESTAN.

'Twas the hand of heaven;
I was but its unworthy instrument;
Its providence hath softened the fierce soul
Of youthful Osman: but a bitter draught
Is poured into my cup of joy; his mercy
Is cruel and oppressive: God, who sees
My heart, will bear me witness that I meant
To serve his cause, and act for him alone;
For heaven I had reserved a youthful beauty,
Whom fierce Nouraddin had enslaved, what time
The proud contemners of our holy faith
Surprised great Lusignan, myself long-time
A captive with her; I at length regained
Short liberty, on promise of return;
And now had fondly hoped, delusive dream!
To bring back Zaïre to that happy court
Where Louis and the virtues reign: already
The queen, propitious to my friendly zeal,
Forth from the throne stretched her protecting hand;
But now alas! the wished-for moment near
That should have freed her from captivity,
She must not go; what did I say? she will not;
Zaïre herself forsakes the Christian faith
For Osman, for the Sultan, who, it seems,
Adores her—but we'll think no more of Zaïre,
Another cruel care demands our grief,
Another base refusal; O Chatillon,
The wretched Christian's hope is now no more.

CHATILLON.

Accept my all, my liberty, my life,
If it can save them, 'tis at thy disposal.

NERESTAN.

Alas! old Lusignan is still a slave,
The last of his great race, a race of heroes,
Descended from the valiant Bouillon; he,
Whom fame has made immortal, still must groan
In chains, for Osman never will restore him.

CHATILLON.

Then all thy goodness, all thy cares are vain:
What soldier, who e'er held his honor dear,
Would wish for freedom whilst his chief remains
In slavery! Thou, Nerestan, couldst not know
The gallant Lusignan as I have known him,
For thou wert born, so gracious heaven ordained,
Long after those sad times of woe and slaughter,
When I beheld our city fall a prey
To these barbarians: O if thou hadst seen
The temple sacked, the holy tomb profaned,
Fathers, and children, husbands, daughters, wives
In flames expiring at the altar's feet;
Our good old sovereign, bent beneath the weight
Of years, and murdered o'er his bleeding sons!
Then Lusignan, the last of his high race,
Revived our drooping courage; terrible
He stood, amidst the carnage of the field,
His right hand grasped a falchion wet with blood,
And with the left he pointed to the cross;
Then cried aloud, "Now countrymen be faithful."
The power divine, that favored us this day,
Protected him in that tremendous hour

Beneath its friendly wing, and smoothed his path
To safety and repose: Cæsarea then
Received our poor remains, where Lusignan
Was by the general voice proclaimed our king:
O my Nerestan, the Almighty power,
To humble haughty man, withholds from him
Fair virtue's prize till life's short race is run;
We fought long-time for heaven, but fought in vain;
The sacred city, smoking in its ruins,
Still lay, when by a treacherous Greek betrayed
In our asylum, we beheld the flame
That raged in hapless Sion reach to us,
And over Cæsarea's walls with fury spread;
There, bound in ignominious chains, I saw
Great Lusignan, superior to misfortune,
And only weeping for his country's fate;
E'er since that fatal hour the good old man,
The Christians' father (he deserves that name)
In a dark dungeon lies, by all neglected,
By all forgotten: such is the hard fate
For us he suffers, and whilst he is wretched
Tell me, Nerestan, how can we be happy?

NERESTAN.

Unless we were barbarians: O I loathe
The destiny that keeps us from each other;
Thou hast recalled the times and sorrows past;
I shudder at the sad remembrance of them:
Cæsarea buried in her smoking ruins,
Thy prison, and great Lusignan in bondage,
Were the first objects that my eyes beheld;
I know thy woes, with them my life began;
Midst shrieking infants, ravished from the breasts
Of trembling mothers, was Nerestan borne
To this seraglio, with my fellow-captive,

The lovely Zaïre, who, forgive my sighs,
For this barbarian now hath left her God.

CHATILLON.

It is the glory of these Mussulmans
Thus to seduce the minds of captive Christians;
Blest be the hand of heaven that saved thy youth
From their delusions; but, my lord, this Zaïre,
Though she renounced the Christian faith, may serve
The Christian cause; her interest with the Sultan,
Who loves her, may be useful; by what arm
God sends us help, it matters not; for justice
With wisdom oft conspires to draw advantage
Alike from our misfortunes, and our crimes:
The beauteous Zaïre's influence may subdue
The stubborn heart of Osman, and persuade him
To give us back a hero whom himself
Must needs admire, and whom he cannot fear.

NERESTAN.

But thinkest thou Lusignan would condescend
To take his liberty on terms like these?
Or if he would, how can I get from Zaïre
A moment's audience? Osman will not grant it:
Will this seraglio's gates, for ever barred,
Open to me? nay, grant I gain admission,
What can I hope from an apostate woman?
Nerestan's presence would reproach her falsehood,
And she must read her shame upon my brow:
'Tis most ungrateful to the generous mind
To sue for aid of those whom we despise:
If they refuse, it sorely hurts our pride;
And if they grant, we blush to accept it of them.

CHATILLON.

Yet think on Lusignan, and strive to serve him.

NERESTAN.

I must: but how to get at this false woman——
We're interrupted; ha! who comes? 'tis Zaïre.

SCENE II.

ZAÏRE, CHATILLON, NERESTAN.

ZAÏRE.

[*To Nerestan.*

Be not alarmed; by Osman's leave I come
To thank the brave Nerestan; do not look
So sternly on me, nor with bitter words
Reproach my weakness; I have wished, yet feared,
To meet thee; why I know not, but my heart
Still flutters at thy presence; from our birth
We have been subject to one common fate;
One prison held us in our infant years;
Together have we felt the galling yoke
Of slavery, still by tender friendship made
Lighter to both: at length thy kinder fate
Led thee to France, and I was left to mourn
Thy absence; whether it arose from pity,
From nobleness of soul, or partial fondness,
I know now, but thy generous ardor fought
And gained a ransom for the hapless Zaïre;
But heaven hath counteracted thy kind purpose,
And I am doomed for ever to remain
In Solyma: long time a slave unknown,
And undistinguished, Zaïre lived, till Osman
Look'd down upon me; but tho' fortune smiles
Propitious now, and offers all her charms

Of pomp and grandeur, yet I cannot leave
Without regret my fellow-captive: oft
Shall I reflect on thee, and on thy goodness,
And cherish the remembrance of thy virtues:
Like thee, I will endeavor to relieve
The wretched, ever will protect the Christians,
And be a mother to them; for thy sake
They will be always dear to Zaïre.

NERESTAN.

You
Protect the Christian! you who have forsaken them?
You, who have trampled on the sacred ashes
Of Lusignan's great ancestors!

ZAÏRE.

O no:
I hold their virtues in most dear remembrance,
And come even now to give you back your joy,
Your hope, the last and greatest of their race:
Your Lusignan is free, and comes to meet you.

CHATILLON.

And shall we see once more our honored father,
Our best support?

NERESTAN.

And shall we owe to Zaïre
A life so precious?

ZAÏRE.

When I asked the favor
I did not hope it, but the generous sultan,
Beyond my wish, consented, and they soon
Will bring him here.

NERESTAN.

How my heart beats, Chatillon!

ZAÏRE.

I weep his fate, Nerestan, for, like him,
I too have languished in captivity;
Woes which ourselves have felt we always pity.

NERESTAN.

Good heaven, what virtue in an infidel!

SCENE III.

ZAÏRE, LUSIGNAN, CHATILLON, NERESTAN, *Several Christian Slaves.*

LUSIGNAN.

Who calls me from the dark abode of death?
Am I with Christians? O support me, guide
My trembling footsteps; I am weak with age
And with misfortunes: am I free indeed?

ZAÏRE.

You are, my lord.

CHATILLON.

You live to make us happy,
Us wretched Christians.

LUSIGNAN.

Sure I know that voice:
Can it be you, Chatillon? do I see
My friend, my fellow martyr to the faith
Of our forefathers? where am I? O aid
My feeble sight!

CHATILLON.

This is the palace, sir,
Built by your royal ancestors, but now
The seat of fierce Nouraddin's son.

ZAÏRE.

Great Osman,
Its noble master, is a friend to virtue:
This generous youth,
[*Pointing to Nerestan.*
To thee unknown, from France
Is late arrived, and kindly brings with him
The ransom of ten Christian slaves; the sultan,
Resolved in honor's path to tread with him,
To crown their wishes, has delivered thee.

LUSIGNAN.

The sons of France are in their nature noble,
Beneficent, and brave; I know them well,
And have experienced their humanity.
[*Turning to Nerestan.*
Hast thou then passed the ocean to relieve
These wretched captives' woes, and set us free?
Say, generous stranger, whom am I to thank
For this unequalled goodness?

NERESTAN.

I am called
Nerestan; almost from my birth a slave
In Solyma; I left in earliest years
The Turkish empire, and with Louis learned
The rugged talk of war; beneath his banner
Long time I fought; to him I owe my rank
And fortune, to the first of monarchs, famed
Alike for valor and for holy zeal
To heaven and its true faith: I followed him
To Charent's banks, where the fierce English, long
Unconquered, bent beneath the Gallic power.
Haste then, and show the venerable marks
Of thy hard slavery to the best of kings;

He will reward thee; Paris will revere
A martyr to the cross, and Louis' court,
The asylum of oppressed royalty,
With open arms receive an injured sovereign.

LUSIGNAN.

I knew the court of France in all its glory;
When Philip conquered at Bouvines, I fought
With Montmorency, Melum, and d'Estaing,
With valiant Nesle, and the renowned Coucy,
But never shall behold it more; alas!
Thou seest I am descending to the grave,
To seek the King of Kings, and ask of him
The due reward of all my sufferings past.
Whilst I have life, yet hear me, thou kind witness
Of my last moments, good Chatillon, thou
Nerestan, too, and this fair mourner here,
Who honors with her tears the wretched fate
Of dying Lusignan: O pity me,
Pity the most unhappy father sure
That ever groaned beneath the wrath of heaven!
Time has no power o'er miseries like mine:
Still I lament a daughter, and three sons,
Torn from me in their infancy: Chatillon,
Thou must remember it.

CHATILLON.

I do, my lord,
And shudder at it now.

LUSIGNAN.

A prisoner with me,
Cæsarea then in flames, thou sawest my wife
And two of my dear sons expire.

CHATILLON.

I did;
Loaded with chains I could not help them.

LUSIGNAN.

O
I was a father, and yet could not die:
O ye loved infants, from your heavenly mansion
Look down propitious on my other children,
If yet they live, O succor and protect them!
To this seraglio, even where now we stand,
That daughter and that son whom I lament
Were by the hands of vile barbarians borne,
And here condemned to bear the shameful yoke
Of slavery.

CHATILLON.

'Tis too true; your daughter then
Was in her cradle; in these arms I held her,
And scarce had time to sprinkle o'er her face
The holy water, and pronounce her Christian,
E'er the rude hands of bloody Saracens
Rushed in, and tore her from me: thy last son,
Scarce four years old, just capable of feeling
His early sorrows, to Jerusalem
Was carried with his sister.

NERESTAN.

How my heart
Beats at the mournful tale! about that age
I was a prisoner in Cæsarea; thence,
Covered with blood, and bound in chains, I followed
A crowd of Christian slaves.

LUSIGNAN.

Didst thou; O heaven!
And wert thou brought up here in this seraglio?

[*Looking earnestly at them.*
Alas! perhaps you might have known my children,
Your age the same; perhaps these eyes—O madam,
What foreign ornament is that? how long
May you have worn it?

ZAÏRE.

Ever since my birth:
Why sigh you, sir?

LUSIGNAN.

Permit my trembling hands—

ZAÏRE.

Whence is this strange emotion? O my lord,
What look you so intently on?

LUSIGNAN.

O heaven!
O Providence! O eyes, do not deceive
My fearful hope—'tis she—it was a present
To my dear wife; my children always wore it
Upon their birthday: O I faint, I die
With rapture.

ZAÏRE.

Ha! what do I hear? my soul
Is lost in doubt; O say, my lord——

LUSIGNAN.

Great God,
Who seest my tears, forsake me not; O thou
Who on this cross didst perish, and for us
Didst rise again, this is thy work, O haste,
Complete it, gracious heaven!
[*Turning to Zaire.*
And hast thou kept it

Indeed so long? and were you prisoners both,
Both in Cæsarea seized, and brought together?

ZAÏRE.

We were, my lord.

NERESTAN.

Can it be so?

LUSIGNAN.

Their speech,
Their features, all confirm it; every look
Brings their dear mother to my eyes: O heaven,
Restore my feeble senses thus o'erpowered
With joy! O madam, O Nerestan, help,
Chatillon, to support me! O Nerestan,
If yet I ought to call thee by that name,
Once thou wert wounded, by a desperate hand;
I saw the villain strike thee; hast thou not
The scar upon thy breast?

NERESTAN.

I have, my lord.

LUSIGNAN.

Just God! blessed moment!

NERESTAN.

[*Kneeling.*
O my lord! O Zaïre!

LUSIGNAN.

Come near, my children.

NERESTAN.

Am I then your son?

ZAÏRE.

My lord!

LUSIGNAN.

O blessed discovery! happy hour!
My son! my daughter! O embrace your father!

CHATILLON.

Trust me, Chatillon's heart rejoices with you.

LUSIGNAN.

I know not how to force me from your arms,
My dearest children! do I then behold
Once more my wretched family? my son,
Thou art the worthy heir of Lusignan:
But say, my daughter, O dispel the doubts
That rise to check my happiness! O God,
That guidest our fortunes, thou who hast restored
My daughter, have I found a Christian? Zaïre,
Alas! thou weepest, and thy dejected eyes
Are turned aside from me: unhappy woman!
I understand thee but too well: O heaven,
O guilt! guilt!

ZAÏRE.

Yes: I'll not deceive my father:
Brought up in Osman's court, and to his laws
Obedient; punish sir, your wretched daughter;
I own I was a Mussulman.

LUSIGNAN.

The wrath
Of heaven pursues me still; and but for thee,
My son, that word had ended my sad being:
For thee, O God! and in thy glorious cause,
These threescore years old Lusignan hath fought,
But fought in vain; hath seen thy temple fall,
Thy goodness spurned, thy sacred rites profaned:

For twenty summers in a dungeon hid,
With tears have I implored thee to protect
My children; thou hast given them to my wishes,
And in my daughter now I find thy foe:
I am myself, alas! the fatal cause
Of thy lost faith; had I not been a slave—
But, O my daughter! thou dear lovely object
Of all my cares, O think on the pure blood
Within thy veins, the blood of twenty kings,
All Christians like myself, the blood of heroes,
Defenders of the faith, the blood of martyrs:
Thou art a stranger to thy mother's fate;
Thou dost not know, that in the very moment
That gave thee birth, I saw her massacred
By those barbarians, whose detested faith
Thou hast embraced: thy brothers, the dear martyrs,
Stretch forth their hands from heaven, and wish to embrace
A sister; O remember them! that God
Whom thou betrayest, for us, and for mankind,
Even in this place expired; where I so oft
Have fought for him, where now his blood by me
Calls loudly on thee: see yon temple, see
These walls; behold the sacred mountain, where
Thy Saviour bled; the tomb whence he arose
Victorious; in each path where'er thou treadest
Shalt thou behold the footsteps of thy God:
Wilt thou renounce thy honor and thy father?
Wilt thou renounce thy maker? O my Zaïre,
Thou weepest; the blood forsakes thy cheek; I see
Thy heart is softened to repentance: truth,
Sent by indulgent heaven, already beams
On thy enlightened soul; again I find
My daughter; from the hands of infidels
To save her thus in happiness and glory.

NERESTAN.

Do I indeed once more behold a sister?
And is her soul—

ZAÏRE.

Dear author of my life,
My father, speak; what must I do?

LUSIGNAN.

Remove
At once my shame and sorrow with a word,
And say thou art—a Christian.

ZAÏRE.

Then, my lord,
I am a Christian.

LUSIGNAN.

'Tis enough, O God!
Thou hearest, receive, and ratify her vow!

SCENE IV.

ZAÏRE, LUSIGNAN, CHATILLON, NERESTAN, ORASMIN.

ORASMIN.

Madam, the sultan wills me to inform you,
You must this moment leave the place, and quit
These Christian slaves: you, Frenchmen, follow me.

CHATILLON.

What dreadful stroke is this?

LUSIGNAN.

Our courage, friends,
Must now support us.

ZAÏRE.

O my lord!

LUSIGNAN.

O thou,
Whom now I dare not name, remember me,
And swear that thou wilt keep the fatal secret.

ZAÏRE.

I swear.

LUSIGNAN.

Farewell! the rest be left to heaven.

End of the Second Act.

ACT III. SCENE I.

OSMAN, ORASMIN.

OSMAN.

Orasmin, 'tis not as thy groundless fears
Suggested to thee; Louis turns no more
His arms against us; his disgusted people
Are wearied with the unsuccessful search
Of climates, which heaven ne'er designed for them:
They will not leave their seats of ease and plenty
To languish in Arabia's sultry deserts,
And wet our verdant palms in Christian blood:
Their ships are spread indeed o'er Syria's sea,
And Asia trembles at the sight; but know,
Towards fertile Egypt Louis bends his way,
In search of Melidor, my secret foe:
Their quarrels fix but on a firmer base
The throne of Osman: I have nought to fear
From Egypt or from France; by their division
My power is strengthened: prodigal of blood,

I thank them for it, they destroy each other,
To save my subjects and avenge my cause.
Release those Christians; I would please their master,
And therefore they shall live; let them be sent
To Louis; it may teach him to respect
Our holy faith, and know me for his friend:
Tell him I give him Lusignan, the man
Who claims by birth alliance to his throne,
Whom my brave father twice subdued, and kept
In chains, nor whilst he lived would set him free.

ORASMIN.

His name so dear to Christians—

OSMAN.

For his name
I heed it not.

ORASMIN.

O but, my lord, if Louis—

OSMAN.

'Twere needless to dissemble now, Orasmin,
'Tis Zaïre's will, therefore no more; my heart
Yields to its conqueror, and Lusignan
Is given to her; I had not else released
My pris'ner: Louis is not worth my care;
But I would make atonement for the wrongs
Of injured Zaïre and her Christian friends;
I've been too harsh with them: 'tis but an hour
Before our happy nuptials, and meantime
I would oblige my Zaïre; she desires
Some private conference with the brave Nerestan,
That generous Christian—

ORASMIN.

And have you complied?

OSMAN.

I have, Orasmin: they were slaves together
Even from their childhood, and perhaps may ne'er
Behold each other more; she asks, in short,
Who must not be denied: the rigid laws
Of our seraglio were not made for Zaïre;
I hate its cruel, its severe restraint,
That binds the free-born soul in shameful bonds,
And makes a virtue of necessity.
I am not sprung, thank heaven! of Asian blood,
But, midst the rocks of Tauric Scythia born,
From my forefathers boast a Scythian heart,
Fiery and bold, yet generous and humane:
I would have all partake of Osman's joy,
And therefore let Nerestan see her: go,
Conduct him to her, he attends without;
Let Zaïre be obeyed.

SCENE II.

ORASMIN, NERESTAN.

ORASMIN.

Please you to rest
A moment here, till Zaïre comes.

SCENE III.

NERESTAN.

[*Alone.*

Just heaven!
And must I leave her? cruel fate! to whom,
To what is she reserved? alas! my father,
Religion, virtue—but she's here.

SCENE IV.

ZAÏRE, NERESTAN.

NERESTAN.

My sister,
At length we may converse; but what a time
Hath heaven appointed for our meeting! ne'er
Wilt thou behold thy wretched father more.

ZAÏRE.

Not Lusignan? O God!

NERESTAN.

His end is nigh:
His feeble powers, oppressed with sudden joy
At the unexpected sight of his dear children,
Are quite exhausted, and the springs of life
Will soon be motionless; but, O my sister,
Think how the wretched state of his last moments
Will be embittered by his cruel doubts
Concerning thee; uncertain of thy faith
He dies, and asks with his expiring breath
If Zaïre is a Christian.

ZAÏRE.

Am I not
Thy sister? thinkest thou I will e'er renounce
Thy faith and mine, forgetful of the tie
That binds us?

NERESTAN.

Yet thou art a stranger to it;
'Tis but the morning of that glorious day
Which must enlighten thee; thou hast not yet
Received the precious pledge, the sacred stream

That copious flows to wash our crimes away:
Swear by our miseries, by our family,
By all those holy martyrs whence we sprung,
Thou wilt this day receive the mystic seal,
The mark distinctive of the living God.

ZAÏRE.

I swear to thee, by him whom I adore,
That God whose laws unknowing I revere,
Henceforth, Nerestan, to embrace thy faith
And be a Christian: but, O tell me, what
Doth it require of Zaïre?

NERESTAN.

To detest
Thy tyrant master, and obey the God
Of our forefathers, that benignant power
Who died to save us, who conducted me
To my dear sister, and restored to thee
Our long-lost father; but, alas! Nerestan
Cannot instruct thee, mine's a soldier's zeal,
Devoid of knowledge; soon a holy priest
Shall visit thee, and open the fair book
Of wisdom, clear thy mind's obstructed sight,
And give thee liberty, and life: remember
Thy oath; take heed that baptism lead thee not
To curses and to death: but how, my sister,
Shall I gain leave to bring him to thee? whom
Must I apply to in this vile seraglio?
O heaven! that thus the blood of twenty kings,
The daughter of great Lusignan, that thou,
Nerestan's sister, and a Christian, thus
Should be the slave of Osman! but, no more;
You understand me, Zaïre: gracious God!
Were we reserved for this at last?

ZAÏRE.

Go on,
My cruel brother, and pursue thy triumph
O'er Zaïre's weakness; O thou knowest not yet
Her secret faults, her sorrows, and her crimes:
Pity, Nerestan, an unhappy sister,
Misled, betrayed, and dying with despair:
I am a Christian, and impatient wait
The holy water that must purge my heart,
And wash its stains away: I will not live
Unworthy of my brother, of myself,
Of my great ancestors, of thee, my father,
Afflicted Lusignan! but tell me all,
What will your Christian laws require of Zaïre?
How will they punish an unhappy woman,
Left to repine in sad captivity?
What, if amidst her sorrows she should find
A generous patron in a brave barbarian,
Warmed by his goodness, what if she should feel
A grateful passion, and give up her heart
To him that saved her?

NERESTAN.

Ha! what sayest thou? rather
Might instant death—

ZAÏRE.

Strike, and prevent thy shame;
For know——

NERESTAN.

O heaven! couldst thou, my sister?

ZAÏRE.

Yes;
I stand condemned, I am my own accuser:
Osman adores me, and I meant to wed him.

NERESTAN.

To wed him? to wed Osman? can it be?
Couldst thou, descended from a race of kings,
Couldst thou, my sister?

ZAÏRE.

Strike; for know, I love him.

NERESTAN.

Shame as thou art to our untainted blood,
Now, did I listen to the voice of honor,
Did not the law of that all-saving God
Whom yet thou knowest not, did not my religion
Withhold my arm, this moment would I rush
Into the palace, and there sacrifice
This vile barbarian, this imperious lover;
Would plunge the dagger in thy guilty breast,
Then turn it on my own: O infamy!
Whilst Louis, the world's bright example, bears
His conquering legions to the affrighted Nile,
But to return on wings of victory
To free thy captive God, and give him back
His native walls, meantime Nerestan's sister
Renounces all, and weds an infidel:
And must I tell the good old man, his daughter
Hath chosen a Tartar for her God? alas!
Ev'n now thy dying father kneels to heaven
For Zaïre's happiness.

ZAÏRE.

O stay, my brother,
Perhaps thy Zaïre still deserves thy love;
Thou dost not know me; spare thy keen reproaches,
For, O, thy cruel scorn, thy bitter wrath,
Is worse to me even than the death I asked,

Which yet thou hast refused me: O Nerestan,
I know thou art oppressed, I know thou sufferest
For my misfortunes; but I suffer more:
Would that kind heaven had taken my wretched life,
Before this heart glowed with a guilty flame
For Osman! and yet, who that knew his virtues
Would not have loved him! he did all for me;
His generous heart from crowds of fond admirers
Selected Zaïre; she alone subdued
His fiery soul, and softened his resentment:
He hath revived the Christian's hope; to him
I owe the dear delight of seeing thee,
My brother: O Nerestan, thou shouldst pardon,
Indeed thou shouldst, for I am truly wretched:
My oath, my duty, my remorse, my father,
My fatal passion, and thy cruel anger,
Are punishment enough; repentance fills
All Zaïre's soul, and leaves no room for love.

NERESTAN.

I blame, yet pity thee: kind heaven, I trust,
Will never let thee perish in thy sins;
The arm of God, that makes the weakest strong,
Will cherish and support a tender flower
That bends beneath the fury of the storm:
He will not suffer thy divided heart
To fluctuate thus 'twixt Him and a barbarian;
Baptism will quench the guilty flame, and Zaïre
In the true faith shall live a pious Christian,
Or die a martyr: promise then thy father,
Promise thy king, thy country, and that God
Whose powerful voice thou hast already heard,
Thou wilt not think of these detested nuptials
Before the priest hath opened thy dark mind,

And, in Nerestan's sight, pronounced thee Christian:
Say, wilt thou promise, Zaïre?

ZAÏRE.

Yes; I promise:
Make me a Christian, make me free; do what
Thou wilt with Zaïre: but haste, close the eyes
Of my dear father: would I could go with thee,
And die before him!

NERESTAN.

Sister, fare thee well!
Since I must leave thee in this hated palace,
Farewell! remember, I shall soon return
To save thee from perdition, from thyself,
And from the powers of hell, by holy baptism.

SCENE V.

ZAÏRE.

[*Alone.*

I am alone: now hear me, gracious heaven!
For what am I reserved? O God, command
This rebel heart not to relinquish thee!
Am I the daughter of great Lusignan,
Or Osman's wife; a lover, or a Christian?
Ye sacred oaths, my father, and my country,
All shall be heard, all shall be satisfied!
But where's my friend? where is my Fatima?
In this distressful hour the world forsakes me:
Deserted, and forlorn, how shall I bear
The galling weight of these discordant duties!
O God! I will be thine, and thine alone;
But, O! preserve me from the sight of Osman,

The dear, the generous Osman! did I think
This morn, that ere the day was past, my heart
Should dread to see him; I whose every hope
And joy, and happiness, on him alone
Depended? O! I had no other care,
No pleasure, but to listen to his love;
To wish, and wait for, and adore my Osman!
And now it is a crime to think of him.

SCENE VI.

ZAÏRE, OSMAN.

OSMAN.

Come forth, my love! for my impatient soul
Is on the wing, and will not brook delay!
The torch of Hymen casts its sacred light
On happy Osman, and the perfumed mosque
Invites us; Mahomet's all-powerful God
Propitious hears and answers to our vows;
My people on their knees, in fervent prayer,
United sue for Zaïre's happiness;
Whilst thy proud rivals, who disputed long
My heart with thee, at length confess thy power,
Pleased to submit, and happy to obey:
The rites attend thee, and the throne's prepared;
Haste then, my love, and make thy Osman happy.

ZAÏRE.

O grief! O love! O wretched Zaïre!

OSMAN.

Haste.

ZAÏRE.

O hide me!

OSMAN.

Ha! what sayest thou?

ZAÏRE.

O my lord——

OSMAN.

Give me thy hand, come, beauteous Zaïre, deign—

ZAÏRE.

What can I say to him? assist me, heaven!

OSMAN.

O! I must triumph o'er this tender weakness,
This sweet embarrassment; it makes me love thee
With double ardor.

ZAÏRE.

O!

OSMAN.

Those sighs, my Zaïre,
Endear thee more to Osman; 'tis the mark
Of modest virtue thus to shrink from love;
But haste, my charmer, and repay my fondness,
My constancy——

ZAÏRE.

O Fatima, support me!
My lord——

OSMAN.

Well, what? O heaven!

ZAÏRE.

That heaven's my witness,
All Zaïre's hopes of happiness were placed
On thee; my soul desired to call thee mine:

Not that I sought the splendor of a throne;
Thoughts distant far and nobler filled my breast:
I could have wish, to thee and to thy virtues
United, to have lived in solitude,
With thee despised the pomp of Asia's pride,
And spurned her crowns and sceptres at my feet:
But O! my lord, these Christians——

OSMAN.

What have they
To do with Osman, or with Osman's love?

ZAÏRE.

Old Lusignan, oppressed with age and sorrow,
Now touches his last moments.

OSMAN.

Be it so;
What is that Christian slave to thee, or why
Feelest thou for him? thou art not of his faith,
But from thy infant years hast followed mine,
And worshipped Osman's God; shall Zaïre weep
Because an old man pays the debt of nature?
At such a time as this shall Zaïre mourn?
Should she not rather centre all her cares
In Osman now, and think of naught but love?

ZAÏRE.

If ever I was dear to thee—

OSMAN.

If ever!
O God!

ZAÏRE.

Defer, my lord, a little while
Our nuptials, let me—

OSMAN.

Ha! what sayest thou? heaven!
Can Zaïre speak thus?

ZAÏRE.

O I cannot bear
His anger.

OSMAN.

Zaïre!

ZAÏRE.

O forgive, my lord,
These sighs! alas, I have forgot myself,
Forgot my duty, all I owe to thee:
I cannot bear that look—permit me, sir,
But for a moment to retire, to hide
My tears, my grief, my love, and my despair.
[*She goes out.*

SCENE VII.

OSMAN, ORASMIN.

OSMAN.

Amazement! dumb and motionless I stand
With horror: did I hear aright, Orasmin,
Was it to me that Zaïre spoke, to Osman?
Does she avoid me; fly from me? O heaven!
What have I seen, and whence this wondrous change?
She's gone, she's lost; I know not who I am,
Or what, or where.

ORASMIN.

You are yourself the cause

Of your complaint, and but accuse a heart
Where you and you alone in triumph reign.

OSMAN.

But why those sighs, those tears, that sudden flight!
Whence that deep sorrow, in her downcast eyes
So plainly written? O if that wily Frenchman—
Horrible thought! how dreadfully the light
Breaks in upon me! 'tis impossible;
A vile barbarian; O, it cannot be
Orasmin; thinkest thou that the heart of Osman
Will e'er descend to fear a Christian slave?
But tell me, thou perhaps couldst mark her features,
And understand the language of her eye;
Am I betrayed? nay, do not hide thy thoughts,
But let me know my misery: ha! thou tremblest;
It is enough.

ORASMIN.

I would not rive thy heart
With fond suspicions: I beheld her weep,
But nothing more; saw naught that could alarm—

OSMAN.

Was I reserved to bear an injury
Like this? had Zaïre meant to play me false,
She would have done it with more art; would ne'er
Have openly avowed her treacherous purpose:
O no; she must be innocent; but tell me,
This Frenchman—he, thou sayest too sighed and wept;
And what of that! he might not sigh for her;
It was not love perhaps that made him weep;
Or if it was, why should I fear a slave,
One who to-morrow parts from her forever?

ORASMIN.

Against our laws, my lord, you gave him leave
To see her twice; he came.

OSMAN.

The traitor! yes,
I know he did; but if again he dares
To visit her, I'll tear the slave to pieces,
And mix his life-blood with the faithless Zaïre's.
Pardon, my friend, the transports of a heart
So deeply pierced; it is by nature warm,
And has been wounded in the tenderest part:
I know my rage, Orasmin, and my weakness,
Know 'tis beneath me to be thus disturbed;
But Zaïre—O I cannot, will not think it:
Her heart could ne'er be guilty of such baseness,
It was not made for falsehood; nor shall Osman
Stoop to complaint or mean submission; no:
It were unworthy of a king to wait
For explanations of this strange conduct:
I will resume that empire o'er my heart
Which I had lost, forget the very name
Of Zaïre: yes; henceforth let my seraglio
Be shut forever, fear and terror reign
Within my palace; let despotic power
Rule unreluctant o'er a race of slaves!
Osman henceforth shall be an eastern king,
And reign like them: perhaps we may forget
Our rank a while, and cast an eye of favor
Upon our vassals; but to stand in awe
Of a proud mistress, is most shameful; no:
To western climes we leave such fond submission:
The dangerous sex, ambitious to enslave

Our easy hearts, and bend them to their will,
In Europe rule, but here they must obey.

End of the Third Act.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

ZAÏRE, FATIMA.

FATIMA.

How I admire, and how I pity thee!
The Christian God inspires thee; let not then
Thy soul despair, for he shall give thee strength
To break the powerful chains of mighty love.

ZAÏRE.

When shall I make the glorious sacrifice?

FATIMA.

Thou suest to heaven for pardon, but mayest claim
Its justice; God will guard thy innocence,
And shield thy virtue.

ZAÏRE.

Zaïre never wanted
His kind protection more.

FATIMA.

The God thou servest
Will be a father to thee; he shall guide
Thy wandering steps, speak to thy doubting heart,
And take thee to his bosom: though the priest
Dare not attend thee here—

ZAÏRE.

Alas! my friend,
How have I pierced the soul of generous Osman,
And driven him to despair! a dreadful task!

But 'tis thy will, O God, and I obey:
Zaïre had been too happy.

FATIMA.

Wilt thou then
Hazard the victory after all thy toil?

ZAÏRE.

Unhappy victory, and inhuman virtue!
Alas! thou knowest not, Fatima, how dear
They cost me; all my hopes of happiness
Were fixed on love, and Osman: take my heart,
Accept my guilty tears, subdue my passion
Eternal God, and make me all thy own!
But O my friend, even now the lovely image
Of my dear generous Osman steps between
My God and me; that form is still before me,
Forever in my sight: ye race of kings
From whom I sprang, my father, mother, country,
And thou, my God, since you have taken him from me,
Finish a life that is not worth my care
Without him; let me die a blameless victim,
Let Osman close the eyes of her he loved!
But he has left me, left the wretched Zaïre,
Inquires not, thinks not of me; O I faint,
My Fatima, I never can survive it.

FATIMA.

Remember thou art the daughter of a king,
The favorite of heaven, the chosen of God;
And will not he protect thee?

ZAÏRE.

Will he not
Protect my Osman too? a God of mercy

Can never hate, can never persecute
A heart so just, so brave, so good as Osman's;
What could he more, had he been born a Christian?
O that this holy minister would come,
This blest interpreter of heaven's high will,
To ease my wounded heart, and give me comfort!
Still I have hope that kind benignant God,
Whose darling attribute is clemency,
Will not forbid our union, will forgive
The struggles of a heart so torn as mine;
Perhaps by raising Zaïre to the throne
Of Syria he might serve the Christian cause:
Great Saladin, thou knowest, whose potent arm
Robbed us of Jordan's empire, who, like Osman,
Was famed for mercy, from a Christian sprung.

FATIMA.

Alas! thou seest not that, to calm thy soul,
Mistaken as thou art——

ZAÏRE.

I see it all;
See that my father, country, friends, condemn me;
See that I follow Lusignan, yet love,
Adore my Osman; see that still my life
Is linked with his: O I could wish to see him,
To throw me at his feet, and tell him all.

FATIMA.

That would destroy thy brother, and endanger
The Christians, who have no support but thee;
Thou wouldst betray that God who calls thee back
From error's paths, and bids thee follow him.

ZAÏRE.

O didst thou know the noble heart of Osman!

FATIMA.

He is protector of the Mussulman,
Therefore the more he loves thee, doubtless, Zaïre,
Less willing must he be to have thee worship
A God his faith has taught him to abhor.
The priest, thou knowest, will visit thee in secret,
And thou hast promised——

ZAÏRE.

I will wait for him;
I've promised to preserve the secret still
From Osman; cruel silence! but to make
My woes complete, I am no longer loved.

SCENE II.

OSMAN, ZAÏRE.

OSMAN.

There was a time when thy deluding charms
Inflamed my soul; a willing captive then
I gloried in my chains: I hoped indeed,
Vain hope! a sovereign sighing at thy feet
Might claim some kind return, and thought myself
Beloved by Zaïre; but I am undeceived:
Yet think not, madam, I will ever stoop
To mean complaints, or with the whining race
Of vulgar lovers vindicate my wrongs
By loud reproaches; no: I am above
Dissimulation, and am come to tell you
I mean to treat it with that just contempt
Which it deserves; think not by female arts,
Or subtle arguments, to color o'er
Thy conduct, I disclaim thee, know thee not;

And, for I would not make thee blush, desire
The hated cause may be a secret still;
I would not wish to know it: all is past:
Another may be found to fill the throne
Which you despise; another may have eyes
Perhaps for Osman's merit, and a heart
For Osman's love: I know 'twill cost me dear
To part from Zaïre, but I am resolved:
For I had rather lose thee, rather die
With anguish and despair, than make thee mine,
If but a sigh escaped thee for another,
And not for Osman: fare thee well; these eyes
Must ne'er behold thee more.

ZAÏRE.

It is thy will
O, God, to reign unrivalled in my heart,
And thou hast robbed me now of all:—my lord,
Since you no longer love me—

OSMAN.

'Tis too true;
Honor commands it; I adored thee once,
But I must leave thee, must renounce thee, 'twas
Thy own request—beneath another law—
Zaïre, thou weepest!

ZAÏRE.

O think not, I beseech you,
Think not, my lord, I shall regret the pomp
And splendor of a throne; it is decreed
That I must lose thee, such is my hard fate:
But punish me forever, angry heaven,
If there be aught on earth I shall regret
But Osman's heart!

OSMAN.

Zaïre, thou lovest me!

ZAÏRE.

Love him!

O God!

OSMAN.

Amazement? Zaïre said she loved me:
Why then thou cruel maid, why tear the heart
Of faithful Osman thus? in my despair,
Alas! I thought I could command myself
To love, or hate; but 'tis impossible:
Zaïre can never be forgotten; no:
Osman could never harbor such a thought,
To place another on his throne; forgive
My rage, my madness; 'twas affected all,
All false; I could not leave, I could not hate thee;
It was the only scorn thy tender heart
Ever experienced: O I love thee still,
And ever must: but wherefore thus delay
My happiness? speak, was it fond caprice,
Or was it fear, or artifice? but art
Was never made for thee; thou needest it not:
Even where it is most innocent, it looks
Like falsehood, and perfidiousness: O Zaïre,
Let it not break the holy tie that binds us:
I ever have abhorred it: Osman's heart
Is full of naught but truth.

ZAÏRE.

Despair, and horror!
O thou art dear to me, indeed thou art,
Believe me, Osman; and the tender love
I feel for thee makes me supremely wretched.

OSMAN.

Explain thyself: O heaven! and can it be?
But thou wert born to make me wretched.

ZAÏRE.

Why
Must I not speak?

OSMAN.

What dreadful secret, Zaïre,
Dost thou keep from me? have the Christian slaves
Conspired against me? speak, am I betrayed?

ZAÏRE.

Who would betray so good so kind a master?
No, generous Osman, thou hast naught to fear;
Zaïre alone is wretched: but her griefs
Are to herself.

OSMAN.

Great God! is Zaïre wretched?

ZAÏRE.

Permit me on my knees, my lord, to ask
One favor of thee.

OSMAN.

Were it Osman's life,
Thou mightest command it: speak, and it is thine.

ZAÏRE.

O would to heaven we could have been united!
But O, my lord, permit me this one day
To be alone; leave me to meditate
On my misfortunes, and to hide my griefs
From thee; to-morrow all shall be revealed:

OSMAN.

O heaven! what woes dost thou inflict upon me!
Canst thou———

ZAÏRE.

If love still pleads for Zaïre, grant her
This one request! do not refuse me.

OSMAN.

Well;
It must be so; I have no will but thine:
Remember that I sacrifice to thee
The dearest, happiest moments of my life.

ZAÏRE.

O talk not thus, my lord, it wounds my heart
Too deeply.

OSMAN.

You will leave me, Zaïre?

ZAÏRE.

Yes:
I must; farewell.

SCENE III.

—

OSMAN, ORASMIN.

OSMAN.

So soon to seek retirement!
It is an insult o'er my easy heart;
The more I think, Orasmin, on her conduct,
The more am I perplexed; I cannot find
The hidden cause of this mysterious sorrow:
By Osman's partial fondness raised to empire,
Even in the bosom of that happiness
Her soul desired, thus loving and beloved,
Yet are her eyes forever bathed in tears:
I hate her fond caprice, her discontent

And causeless grief—yet was not I to blame?
Did I not slight her? did I not offend
My Zaïre? wherefore then should I complain?
I must atone for my injurious transports
By double kindness, by indulging her
In every wish: it is enough that Osman
Is loved by Zaïre: her untainted soul
Is void of art; hers is the tender age
Of innocence and truth, when simple nature
Guides every thought, and dictates every word:
I will rely on her sincerity:
I know she loves me; in her eyes I read
The tender tale; whilst her impatient soul
Flew to her lovely lips and told me all:
Can there on earth be hearts so base as e'er
To boast a passion which they never feel?

SCENE IV.

OSMAN, ORASMIN, MELIDOR.

MELIDOR.

My lord, the guards have stopped a letter sent
To Zaïre.

OSMAN.

Give it me: who sent it to her?

MELIDOR.

One of those Christian slaves whom you released,
Who, as he strove to enter the seraglio,
Was seized, and put in chains.

OSMAN.

Ha! what do I read!
Leave me—I tremble——

SCENE V.

OSMAN, ORASMIN.

ORASMIN.

This may clear up all,
And set your heart at ease.

OSMAN.

Ha! let me read
Again; this letter must determine all,
And fix my fate—"Dear Zaïre, now's the time
To meet us; near the mosque thou wilt perceive
A secret passage; unsuspected thence
Thou mayest escape, and easily deceive
Thy keepers; we must hazard all; thou knowest
My zeal: I wait impatient for thee; haste,
I cannot live, if thou shouldst prove unfaithful
What sayest thou, my Orasmin?

ORASMIN.

I, my lord?
I'm shocked, astonished at her.

OSMAN.

Now thou seest
How I am treated.

ORASMIN.

O detested treason!
You must resent an injury like this:
You who so lately but on slight suspicion
So deeply felt the wound; a deed so black,
I hope, my lord, will cure you of your love.

OSMAN.

Haste, my Orasmin, fly this instant, show her

That letter—let her tremble, and then plunge
The dagger in her faithless breast—no, stay,
Not yet—that Christian first—let him be brought
Before her—stay—I can determine nothing,
My rage o'erpowers me; O I faint, support me,
Orasmin.

ORASMIN.

'Tis indeed a cruel stroke!

OSMAN.

'Tis all unfolded now, this dreadful secret,
That sat so heavy on her guilty heart:
Beneath the specious veil of modest fear
She left me for a while; I let her go;
She wept at parting; wept but to betray me;
O Zaïre, Zaïre.

ORASMIN.

Everything conspires
To make her doubly guilty: O my lord,
Fall not a victim to her arts, recall
Thy wonted courage, and deep sense of wrong.

OSMAN.

This is the gallant, boasted, brave Nerestan,
The Christian's hero, that proud son of honor,
So famed for his sublimity of virtue;
Admired, nay envied by the jealous Osman;
Who could not bear a rival in a slave,
And now he stoops to this vile treachery,
This base imposture: O but Zaïre—she
Is far more guilty, O a thousand times
More vile, more impious—a poor Christian slave,
I might have left her in her mean estate,
And not debased her; well she knows what Osman
Has done for her; ungrateful wretch!

ORASMIN.

My lord,
If midst the horrors of thy troubled soul
I might be heard—forgive me—but if——

OSMAN.

Yes:
I'll see, and talk to her—go, fetch her hither;
Fly, bring her, slave.

ORASMIN.

In this distracted state
What can you say to her?

OSMAN.

I know not what;
But I must see her.

ORASMIN.

To complain, to threaten,
To make her weep, to let your easy heart
Again be softened by her tears, to seek,
In spite of all your wrongs, some poor pretence
To justify her conduct: trust me, sir,
'Twere better to conceal this paper from her,
Or send it to her by some hand unknown;
Thus, spite of all her arts, thou mayest discover
Her inmost thoughts, and unsuspected trace
The secret windings of her treacherous heart.

OSMAN.

Dost thou indeed believe that Zaïre's false?
But I will tempt my fate, and try her virtue;
I'll try how far a bold and shameless woman
Can urge her falsehood.

ORASMIN.

O my lord, I fear,
A heart like thine——

OSMAN.

Be not alarmed: alas!
Osman, like Zaïre, never can dissemble:
But I am master of myself, and know
How to restrain my anger: yes, Orasmin;
Since she descends so low—here—take this letter,
This fatal scroll, choose out a trusty slave,
And send it to her—go:—I will avoid her:
Let her not dare approach—just heaven! 'tis she.

SCENE VI.

OSMAN, ZAÏRE, ORASMIN.

ZAÏRE.

I have obeyed your orders, and attend you,
But own they much surprised me; whence, my lord,
This sudden message? what important business——

OSMAN.

Business of moment, madam, of much more
Than you perhaps imagine; I've reflected
On our condition, Zaïre: we have made
Each other wretched, and 'tis fit we come
To explanations for our mutual interest:
Perhaps my care, my tenderness, my bounty,
The confidence my soul reposed on Zaïre,
My pride forgot, my sceptre at thy feet,
All my officious services demanded
Some kind return from Zaïre; nay perhaps

Forever courted, and forever pressed
By a fond lover, thy reluctant heart
Might yield, mistaking gratitude for love:
Let us be free and open to each other,
Answer with truth to my sincerity:
If love's supreme unconquerable power
Pleads for another, if thy doubtful heart
Uncertain wavers 'twixt his claim and mine,
Avow it frankly, and I here forgive thee;
But pause not, let me know my rival, quick,
Now whilst I'm here, whilst I am speaking to thee,
A moment more will be too late for pardon.

ZAÏRE.

Is this a language fit for me to hear,
Or you to speak, my lord? I've not deserved it;
But know, this injured heart, which heaven hath tried
With sore affliction, could defy thy power,
Did it not feel its foolish weakness still
For Osman; were it not for my fond love,
That fatal passion, which I ought no more
To cherish, never should I thus descend
To justify my conduct: whether heaven,
That still hath persecuted wretched Zaïre,
Decrees that we shall pass our lives together,
I know not; but, whatever be my lot,
By honor's sacred laws, that in my heart
Are deeply graved, I swear, were Zaïre left
To her own choice, she would reject the vows
Of powerful monarchs kneeling at her feet;
All would be hateful to her after Osman:
But I will tell thee more, will open all
My foolish heart, will own it sighed for thee
Long ere thy passion justified my own:

Never did Zaïre own another master,
Nor ever will: here, bear me witness, heaven!
If I offended, if I have deserved
Eternal wrath; if Zaïre has been guilty,
If she has been ungrateful, 'twas for thee.

OSMAN.

Good heaven! she talks of tenderness and love,
Though I have proof before me of her falsehood;
O black ingratitude! O perjured Zaïre!

ZAÏRE.

What says my lord? you seem disordered.

OSMAN.

No:
I am not, for thou lovest me.

ZAÏRE.

That fierce tone,
And wild demeanor, suit not with thy words;
Thou talkest of love, yet fillest my heart with terror.

OSMAN.

Thou lovest me?

ZAÏRE.

Canst thou doubt it? yet thy eyes
Are red with anger; what indignant looks
They cast upon me; furies in thy aspect!
Thou dost not doubt me?

OSMAN.

No: I doubt no longer:
You may retire: be gone.

SCENE VII.

OSMAN, ORASMIN.

OSMAN.

Didst thou observe her
Orasmin? how she braves it to the last
She glories in her crime; so artful too,
So calmly, so deliberately false:
But say, my friend, hast thou dispatched that slave,
That I may know the worst of Zaïre's guilt,
And Osman's shame?

ORASMIN.

I have obeyed your orders;
Now I may hope you will no longer sigh
For Zaïre and her treacherous charms; henceforth
You must behold her with indifference,
Unless you should at last repent your justice,
And love resume his empire o'er your heart.

OSMAN.

Orasmin, I adore her more than ever.

ORASMIN.

Indeed, my lord? O heaven!

OSMAN.

Methinks I see
A dawn of hope before me: this young Christian,
This hated rival, bold, presumptuous, vain
Full of his country's levity, perhaps,
But thinks that Zaïre listened to his vows,
One look from her might easily deceive him:

He thinks himself beloved; and he alone
May be to blame, they may not both be guilty:
She never saw that letter, I have been
Too ready to believe myself undone.
Orasmin, mark me—at the dead of night,
When darkness lends her sable veil to hide
The crimes of mortals, soon as this Nerestan
Comes to the palace, instant let the guard
Seize him, and bound in fetters bring him to me:
Leave Zaïre free: thou knowest my heart; thou knowest
To what excess I love; thou knowest how fierce
My anger is, how cruel my resentment;
I tremble but to think on it myself;
O I have been most shamefully deceived;
But woe to those who have offended Osman.

End of the Fourth Act.

ACT V. SCENE I.

OSMAN, ORASMIN, *a Slave.*

OSMAN.

They've told her of it, and she comes to meet him;
False wretch!—remember, slave, thy master's fate
Is in thy hands: give her the Christian's letter;
Observe her well, and bring me back her answer;
Let me know all—but soft, she's here, Orasmin,
[*To Orasmin.*
Come thou with me, and let thy tender friendship
Teach me to hide my rage and my despair.

SCENE II.

ZAÏRE, FATIMA, *a Slave.*

ZAÏRE.

Who can desire to speak with wretched Zaïre,
At such a time, when all is horror round me?
If it should be my brother! but the gates
Are shut on every side; yet heaven's high hand,
To strengthen my weak faith, by secret paths
Might lead him to me: but what unknown slave—

SLAVE.

This letter, madam, trusted to my hands,
Will speak my errand.

ZAÏRE.

Give it me.

[*She reads.*

FATIMA.

[*Aside, whilst Zaïre reads the letter.*

Great God!
Send down thy blessing, and deliver her
From barbarous Osman!

ZAÏRE.

Fatima, come near me,
I must consult with thee.

FATIMA.

[*To the slave.*

You may retire;
Be ready when we call for you: away.

SCENE III.

ZAÏRE, FATIMA.

ZAÏRE.

Read this, my Fatima, and tell me what
I ought to do: I would obey my brother.

FATIMA.

Say rather, madam, that you would obey
The will of heaven; 'tis not Nerestan calls,
It is the voice of God.

ZAÏRE.

I know it is;
And I have sworn to serve him: but the attempt
Is dangerous, to my brother, to myself,
To all the Christians.

FATIMA.

'Tis not that alarms you,
'Tis not their danger that suggests thy fears,
'Tis love: I know thy heart would judge like theirs,
Like theirs determine, did not love oppose it:
But O reflect, be mistress of thyself;
You fear to offend a lover who has wronged,
Who has insulted you; thou canst not see
The Tartar's soul through all his boasted virtues:
Did he not threaten even while he adored?
And yet your heart preserves its fond attachment,
You sigh for Osman still.

ZAÏRE.

I have no cause
To hate him, Osman never injured me;

He offered me a throne, and I refused it;
The temple was adorned, the rites prepared,
And I, who ought to have revered his power,
Despised his offered hand, and braved his anger.

FATIMA.

And canst thou in this great decisive hour
Neglect thy duty thus to think of love?

ZAÏRE.

All, all conspires to drive me to despair:
No power on earth can free me: I would quit
With joy these walls so fatal to my peace,
Would wish to see the Christian's happier clime,
Yet my fond heart in secret longs to stay
Forever here: how dreadful my condition!
I know not what I wish, or what I ought
To do, and only feel myself most wretched:
O I have sad forebodings of my fate,
Avert them, heaven! preserve the Christians, save
My dearest brother!—when Nerestan's gone,
I will take courage, and impart to Osman
The dreadful secret; tell him to what faith
This heart is bound, and who is Zaïre's God;
I know his generous soul will pity me:
But, be as it will, whate'er I suffer,
I never will betray my brother: go,
And bring him here—call back that slave:

SCENE IV.

ZAÏRE.

[*Alone.*

O God
Of my forefathers, God of Lusignan,

And all our race, O let thy hand direct,
Thine eye enlighten Zaïre!

SCENE V.

ZAÏRE, *a Slave.*

ZAÏRE.

Tell the Christian
Who gave thee this, he may depend on me,
And Fatima is ready to conduct him.

[*Aside.*

Take courage, Zaïre, yet thou mayest be happy.

SCENE VI.

OSMAN, ORASMIN, *a Slave.*

OSMAN.

How lingering time retards my hasty vengeance!
He comes:—well, slave, what says she? answer me,
Speak.

SLAVE.

O my lord, her soul was deeply moved:
She wept, grew pale, and trembled; sent me out,
Then called me back, and with a faltering voice,
That spoke a heart oppressed with sorrow, promised
To meet him there this night.

OSMAN.

[*To the slave.*

Away; begone;
It is enough.—Orasmin, hence, I loath
The sight of every human being; go,

And leave me to the horrors of my soul;
I hate the world, myself, and all mankind.

SCENE VII.

OSMAN.

[*Alone.*

Where am I? gracious heaven! O fatal passion!
Zaïre, Nerestan, ye ungrateful pair,
Haste, and deprive me of a life which you
Have made most wretched: O abandoned Zaïre,
Thou shalt not long enjoy—what ho! Orasmin.

SCENE VIII.

OSMAN, ORASMIN.

OSMAN.

Cruel Orasmin! thus to leave thy friend
In his distress! this rival, is he come?

ORASMIN.

Not yet, my lord.

OSMAN.

Detested night, that lendest
Thy guilty veil to cover crimes like these!
The faithless Zaïre! after all my kindness—
Alas! unmoved, and with an eye serene,
I could have borne the loss of empire, kept
My peace of mind in poverty and chains,
But to be thus deceived by her I love—

ORASMIN.

What purpose you, my lord? may I request—

OSMAN.

Didst thou not hear a dreadful cry?

ORASMIN.

My lord!

OSMAN.

Methought I heard some noise: they're coming.

ORASMIN.

No:
No creature stirs, the whole seraglio's wrapped
In sleep: all is silent; night's dark shade—

OSMAN.

All sleeps
But guilt, that wakes and spreads its horrors round me:
To urge her baseness to a height like this!
O Zaïre, thou couldst never know how much,
How tenderly I loved, how I adored thee;
One look from her, Orasmin, guides my fate,
And makes her Osman blest or cursed forever:
Pity my rage, away! ungrateful woman!

ORASMIN.

And dost thou weep? did Osman weep? O heaven!

OSMAN.

'Twas the first time I ever wept, Orasmin;
But they are cruel tears, and death ere long
Will follow them; thou seest my shame, Orasmin:
Now, Zaïre, weep, for they are tears of blood.

ORASMIN.

I tremble for thee.

OSMAN.

Tremble for my love,
For my hard sufferings, for my vengeance: hark!
They come; I cannot be deceived; I hear them.

ORASMIN.

Close by the palace wall they creep along.

OSMAN.

Fly, seize Nerestan, bring him here in chains
Before me.

SCENE IX.

OSMAN, ZAÏRE, FATIMA.

[*In the dark, at the bottom of the stage.*

ZAÏRE.

Fatima, come near me.

OSMAN.

Hark!
What do I hear? 'tis the enchanting voice
That hath so oft seduced me, that false tongue,
The instrument of guilt and perfidy:
But now for vengeance—O 'tis she, 'tis Zaïre,
I cannot strike,
[*He takes out a dagger.*
The uplifted poniard drops
From my weak hand: O heaven!

ZAÏRE.

This is the way,
Come on, support me, Fatima.

FATIMA.

He comes.

OSMAN.

That word awakes my slumbering rage: she dies.

ZAÏRE.

I tremble every step I take; my heart
Sinks down with fear: Nerestan, is it you?
I've waited a long time.

OSMAN.

[*Runs up to Zaïre and stabs her.*
'Tis I, false woman!
'Tis Osman, whom thou hast betrayed: thou diest.

ZAÏRE.

[*Falling on a sofa.*
O, I am slain; great God!

OSMAN.

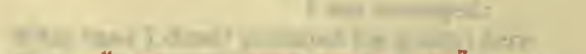
I am revenged:
What have I done? punished the guilty: here
I'll leave her:—Ha! her lover, too—now fate
Completes my vengeance.

SCENE the last.

OSMAN, ZAÏRE, NERESTAN, ORASMIN, *Slaves.*

OSMAN.

Bring the villain hither:
Approach, thou midnight plunderer, who comest
To rob me of my all: now, traitor, take
Thy due reward; prepare thyself for torments,
For miseries, almost equal to my own:
You have given orders for his punishment?


"LOOK, THERE SHE LIES"

ORASMIN.

I have, my lord.

OSMAN.

A part of it thou feelest
Already in thy heart; I see thou lookest
Around thee for the partner of thy crimes,
The wretch who has dishonored me—look there.

NERESTAN.

What fatal error—ha!

OSMAN.

Look, there she lies

NERESTAN.

What do I see? my sister! Zaïre dead!
O monster! O unhappy hour!

OSMAN.

His sister?

Impossible!

NERESTAN.

Barbarian, 'tis too true:
Haste, Osman, haste, and shed the poor remains
Of Lusignan's high blood; destroy Nerestan,
The last of our unhappy race: know, tyrant,
That Lusignan was Zaïre's wretched father:
Within these arms the good old man expired:
And sad Nerestan brought his last farewell,
His dying words to Zaïre: yes, I came
To strengthen her weak heart, direct her will,
And turn her to the Christian faith: alas!
She had opposed the will of heaven, and now
Our God hath punished her for loving thee.

OSMAN.

Did Zaïre love me, Fatima?—his sister?
Did she love Osman, sayest thou?

FATIMA.

Tyrant, yes:
That was her only crime, and thou hast murdered
A lovely innocent who still adored
Her cruel master; still had hopes the God
Of her forefathers gracious would receive
The tribute of her tears, and pity her;
Would have compassion on her artless youth,
Forgive her weakness, and perhaps one day
Unite her to thee: O to that excess
She loved thee, that her heart was long divided
'Twixt Osman and her God.

OSMAN.

It is enough;
I was beloved: away, I'll hear no more.

NERESTAN.

Who next must fall a victim to thy rage?
Thine and thy father's hand have spilt the blood
Of all our race, Nerestan only lives
To brave thee; haste, and send him to that father
Whose guiltless daughter thou hast sacrificed:
Where are your torments? I despise them all:
I've felt the worst thou canst inflict upon me:
But O if yet, all savage as thou art,
Thou canst attend to honor's voice, remember
The Christian slaves whom thou hast sworn to free:
Speak, hast thou yet humanity enough
To keep thy sacred promise? if thou hast,
I die contented.

OSMAN.

Zaïre!

ORASMIN.

O sir, go in,
Let me entreat you—let Nerestan—

NERESTAN.

Speak,
Barbarian, what is thy will?

OSMAN.

[*After a long pause.*
Take off his chains,
Orasmin, let his friends be all set free;
Let the poor Christians have whate'er they wish;
Give them large presents, and conduct them safe
To Joppa.

ORASMIN.

Sir!

OSMAN.

Reply not, but obey me,
I am thy sultan, and thy friend; no more,
But do it instantly—

[*To Nerestan.*
And thou, brave warrior,
Brave but unfortunate, yet not so wretched
As Osman is, leave thou this bloody scene,
And take with thee that victim of my rage,
The dear, the guiltless Zaïre: to thy king,
And to thy fellow Christians, when thou tellest
Thy mournful story, every eye will shed
A tear for thee; all will detest the crime,
And some perhaps lament the fate of Osman:
But take this dagger with thee, which I plunged
In Zaïre's breast; tell them I killed the best,

The sweetest, dearest innocent, that heaven
Ever formed; this cruel hand destroyed her: tell
them
That I adored, and that I have revenged her:
[*Stabs himself.*
[*To his attendants.*
Respect this hero, and conduct him safe.

NERESTAN.

Direct me, heaven! 'midst all my miseries,
And all thy guilt, I must admire thee, Osman;
Nay more, thy foe Nerestan must lament thee.

End of the Fifth and Last Act.

CÆSAR

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

JULIUS CÆSAR, Dictator.
MARK ANTONY, Consul.
JUNIUS BRUTUS, Prætor.
CASSIUS,
CIMBER,
DECIMUS,
DOLABELLA,
CASCA,
} Senators.
ROMANS.
LICTORS.

SCENE, the Capitol at ROME.

CÆSAR.

ACT I. SCENE I.

CÆSAR, ANTONY.

ANTONY.

Yes, Cæsar, thou shalt reign; the day is come,
Propitious to thy vows, when haughty Rome
At length shall know, and shall reward thy virtues,
Long time unjust to thee and to herself,
Shall hail thee on the throne her great avenger,
Her conqueror, and her king: on Antony
Thou mayest depend, who never felt the sting
Of envy, but still held thy honor dear,
Even as his own: thou knowest I formed the chain
Which for the neck of Rome thou hast prepared,
Content to be the second of mankind;
Fonder to bind the wreath on Cæsar's brows
Than rule myself: thou answerest me with sighs,
And the fair prospect that elates my soul
Depresses thine; the master of the world,
The king of Rome complains: can Cæsar mourn?
Can Cæsar fear? what can inspire a soul
Like thine with terror?

CÆSAR.

Friendship, Antony:
But I must open all my heart to thee.
Thou knowest that I must leave thee, fate decrees

We must transport our arms to Babylon,
To wash out, in the savage Parthian's blood,
The shame of Crassus, and the Roman people:
My touring eagle to the Bosphorus
Shall wing his way, my faithful legions wait
But for the royal wreath around my brows,
The wished-for signal: wherefore should not Cæsar
Subdue a kingdom Alexander conquered?
The Rhine submitted, why should not Euphrates
To Cæsar's arms? that hope shall animate
The bosom of thy friend, yet blind him not;
Fortune perhaps, grown weary of her favors,
At length may leave me; Pompey she betrayed,
And may quit Cæsar too; the deepest wisdom
Is oft deceived: where faction reigns, our fate
Suspended hangs, as on the battle's edge,
'Tis but a step from triumph to disgrace.
Cæsar, thou knowest, these forty years hath served,
Commanded, conquered, seen the fate of empires
Lodged in my hands, and trust me, Antony,
In every action the decisive stroke
Depended on a moment: but whate'er
Chance may bring forth, my heart has nought to fear,
Cæsar shall conquer without pride, or die
Without complaint: but from thy tender friendship
One precious boon I must demand of thee;
My children, Antony, will find a friend,
I hope, in thee: I hope that Rome, by me
Defended, and by me subdued, will own
Thy power; thou shalt, with my sons, enjoy
The name of king, and rule o'er all mankind;
Remember, 'tis the last request I make,
That thou wilt be a father to my children;
I ask not for thy oaths, those idle sureties

Of human faith; thy promise is sufficient;
For purer is thy word than sacred altars,
Oft stained with human perjury and falsehood.

ANTONY.

It was enough to leave thy Antony,
And seek for death in foreign climes without him;
To Asia's plains when glory calls my friend,
That I must stay in Italy to plead
My Cæsar's cause, but it afflicts me more
To see thy noble heart dejected thus,
Distrusting fortune, and presaging ills
That ne'er may happen: wherefore talkest thou thus,
Of Antony's dividing with thy sons,
Thy fortunes, and thy fame? thou hast no son
But thy Octavius, no adopted heir.

CÆSAR.

I can no longer hide from thee, my friend,
The griefs that prey upon a father's heart;
Octavius, by the laws, is made the son
Of Cæsar's choice, I have appointed him
My successor; but fate (or shall I call it
Propitious, or unkind I know not which)
Hath made me father to a real son,
One whom I love with tenderness, alas!
But ill repaid by him.

ANTONY.

Can there be one
So base and so ungrateful, so unworthy
The noble blood from whence he sprang?

CÆSAR.

Attend,
And mark me well; thou knowest the unhappy
Brutus,

Instructed in the school of savage virtue
By the stern Cato, he whose furious zeal
Defends our ancient laws, the rigid foe
Of arbitrary power, who, still in arms
Against me, gives my enemies new hope
And new support, who in Thessalia's plains
Was late my captive, whose life twice I saved
Spite of himself, was born amongst my foes,
And bred up far from me.

ANTONY.

Could Brutus, could—

CÆSAR.

Believe not me, but read this paper.

ANTONY.

Gods!
The fierce Servilia! Cato's haughty sister!

CÆSAR.

The same; a private marriage made us one.
Cato, when first our public discord rose,
Indignant forced her to another's arms,
But her new husband, on the very day
That he espoused her, died; and Cæsar's son
Was brought up in the name of Brutus, still
Was he reserved, ye gods, to hate his father!
But read, this fatal scroll will tell thee all.

ANTONY.

[*Reads the paper.*

Cæsar, I die; the wrath of heaven, that cuts
My thread of life, alone can end my love.
Farewell: remember, Brutus is thy son:
And may that tender friendship for his father,
Which at her latest hour Servilia felt,

Live in his mind, and make him worthy of thee.
Has cruel fate to Cæsar given a son
So much unlike him!

CÆSAR.

Brutus hath his virtues:
His haughty courage, though it angers me,
Flatters my pride; I feel a secret pleasure,
Though it offends me: his undaunted heart
Rises superior, and even conquers mine;
I am astonished at him, and his firmness
So shakes my soul I know not how to blame him,
When he condemns the arbitrary power
I have assumed: his genius towers above me:
As man and father, some bewitching charm
Deceives me still, and pleads his cause within;
Or, born a Roman, still my country's voice,
Spite of myself, breaks forth, and calls me tyrant:
Perhaps that liberty I mean to oppress,
Stronger than Cæsar, forces me to love him:
Nay, more: if Brutus owes to me his life,
The son of Cæsar must abhor a master;
For in my early years I thought like him,
Detested Sulla, and the name of tyrant:
Myself had been like him, a citizen,
The partisan of liberty and Rome,
Had not that proud usurper Pompey strove
To crush my fame beneath his growing power;
For I was born ambitious, fierce of soul,
Yet brave and virtuous; if I were not Cæsar,
I would be Brutus—but we all must yield
To our condition: Brutus soon will talk
Another language, when he knows his birth:
Trust me, the royal wreath that's destined for him
Will bend the stubborn temper of his soul:

For manners change with fortune: nature, blood,
My favors, thy advice, united all
With interest and with duty, must restore him.

ANTONY.

I doubt it much; I know his savage firmness;
The sect he follows is a sect of fools,
Perverse and obstinate, whom nothing moves,
Intractable and bold; they make a merit
Of hardening minds against humanity,
Whilst angry nature falls subdued before them;
To these he listens, and to these alone.
The horrid tenets which these sons of pride
Call duty, hold dominion absolute,
And lord it o'er their adamantine hearts.
Cato himself, that wretched stoic, he
Who fell at Utica, that brain-sick hero,
Who spurned thy proffered pardon, and preferred
A shameful death to Cæsar's tender friendship,
Even Cato was less stern, less proud, than he,
Less to be feared than this ungrateful son,
Whom thy good heart would thus endear to thee.

CÆSAR.

What hast thou said, my friend? thy words alarm me.

ANTONY.

I love thee, Cæsar, and must not deceive thee.

CÆSAR.

Time softens all things.

ANTONY.

I despair of it.

CÆSAR.

What! will his hatred—

ANTONY.

Trust me.

CÆSAR.

Well, no matter:
I am a father still: I oft have served,
Nay saved, my bitterest foes: I would be loved
By Rome and by my son; my clemency
Shall conquer every heart; the world subdued,
Shall join with Brutus to adore my power.
Thou must assist me in the great design;
Thou, Antony, didst lend thy useful arm
To aid me in the conquest of mankind,
Thou too must conquer Brutus; try to soften
His spirit, and prepare his savage virtue
For the important secret which my heart
Dreads to reveal; yet he must know it soon.

ANTONY.

I will do all, but cannot hope success.

SCENE II.

CÆSAR, ANTONY, DOLABELLA.

DOLABELLA.

Cæsar, the senators attend your pleasure,
Wait your supreme command, and crave admittance.

CÆSAR.

They've staid too long already; let them enter.

ANTONY.

They come, with hatred and sour discontent
On every brow.

SCENE III.

CÆSAR, ANTONY, BRUTUS, CASSIUS, CIMBER, DECIMUS, CINNA, CASCA, ETC., LICTORS.

CÆSAR.

[*Seated.*

Welcome, ye pillars of immortal Rome,
And friends to Cæsar: Cimber, Decimus,
Cassius, and Cinna, and thou, dearest Brutus,
Come near: at length behold the important hour
When Cæsar, if the gods shall smile upon me,
Goes to complete the conquest of the world,
To seize the throne of Cyrus, and appease
Our Crassus' angry shade: the time is come
When what remains of universal empire,
Still unsubdued, shall yield to Rome and me:
Euphrates calls; to-morrow I depart.
Brutus and Cassius follow me to Asia;
Antony's care is Gaul and Italy;
Cimber must rule o'er the subjected kings
Of Betis' borders, and the Atlantic sea;
Lycia and Greece I give to Decimus;
Pontus to thee, Marcellus; and to Casca
All Syria's wide domain. Our conquests thus
Protected, and Rome left in happiness
And union, naught remains but to determine
What title Cæsar, arbiter of Rome,
And of the world, shall wear: by your command
Sulla was called Dictator; Marius, Consul;
And Pompey, Emperor: I subdued the last,
Let that suffice; new empires will demand
New names; we must have one more great, more sacred,

Less liable to change; one long revered
In ancient Rome, and dear to all mankind.
'Tis rumored through the world, that Rome, in vain,
Wars on the Persian; that a king alone
Must conquer there, and only kings can rule:
Cæsar will go, but Cæsar is no king,
An humble citizen alone, but famed
For his past service, subject to the will
And fond caprice of an uncertain people,
Who yet may thwart—you understand me, Romans,
You know my hopes, my merit, and—my power.

CIMBER.

Cæsar, I'll answer thee. Those crowns, and sceptres,
That world you give us, to the people's eye,
And to the senate, jealous of their rights,
Appear an injury, not a favor done,
On such conditions: Marius, Pompey, Sulla,
Those proud usurpers of the people's power,
Never pretended thus to canton out
Rome's conquests, or to dictate thus, like kings:
We hoped from Cæsar's clemency a gift
More precious, and a nobler treasure, far
Above the kingdoms which thy bounty gave.

CÆSAR.

What wouldst thou ask of Cæsar?

CIMBER.

Liberty.

CASSIUS.

It was thy promise; thou didst swear thyself
Forever to uproot despotic power.
I thought the happy moment now was come,

When the world's conqueror should have made us happy:
Rome bathed in blood, deserted, and enslaved,
Found comfort in that hope: we were her children
Before we were thy slaves—I know thy power,
And know what thou hast sworn.

BRUTUS.

Be Cæsar great,
But Rome still free: the mistress of the world
Abroad, shall she be manacled at home!
Rule o'er the universe, be called a queen,
And yet be fettered! What will it avail
My wretched country, and her sons, to know
That Cæsar has new slaves to trample on?
Perhaps the Persians are not our worst foes,
We may have greater. I've no more to offer.

CÆSAR.

And thou, too, Brutus!

ANTONY.

[*Aside to Cæsar.*
Mark their insolence;
And see if they are worthy of thy favor.

CÆSAR.

And dare ye thus, ungrateful as ye are,
Abuse my patience, and exhaust my love?
My subjects all, by right of conquest mine,
I bought you with my sword; ye spurned indeed
At Marius, but ye were the slaves of Pompey,
And only breathed till Cæsar's wrath, too long
Restrained already, bursts with fury on you.
Ye vile republicans, by mercy taught
But to rebel, ye dared not thus have talked
To Sulla; but my clemency provokes

Your base ungrateful spirit to insult me:
Cæsar, you think, will never condescend
To take revenge, this makes you talk so bravely
Of Rome and of your country, and affect
This patriot pride, this grandeur of the soul,
Before your conqueror: to Pharsalia's plains
You should have brought them; fortune now has placed us
At distance from each other: henceforth learn,
Who knows not how to conquer, must obey.

BRUTUS.

No: Cæsar we shall only learn to die.
Who begged his life in Thessaly? Thou gavest
What was not asked indeed; but to debase us,
And we abhor the gift on such conditions.
Obey thee? No: pour forth thy wrath upon us;
Begin with me; strike here, if thou wouldst reign.

CÆSAR.

Brutus attend—you may retire.

[*To the senators, who go out.*

What words
Are these? away! They pierce my very soul;
Cæsar is far from wishing for thy death:
Leave this rash senate, I entreat thee—stay,
Thou only canst disarm me; thee alone
Cæsar would wish to love: stay with me, Brutus.

BRUTUS.

But keep thy promise, and I'm thine forever:
If thou art a tyrant, I detest thy love;
I will not stay with Antony or thee:
He is no Roman, for he wants a king.

SCENE IV.

CÆSAR, ANTONY.

ANTONY.

What says my friend? Did Antony deceive him?
Thinkest thou that nature e'er can move a soul
So fierce, and so inflexible? No: leave,
I beg thee, unrevealed the fatal secret
That weighs upon thy heart: let him deplore
The fall of Rome, but never let him know
Whose blood he persecutes: he merits not
His noble birth, ungrateful to thy goodness,
Ungrateful to thy love; henceforth renounce him.

CÆSAR.

I cannot, for I love him still.

ANTONY.

Then cease
To love thy power, renounce the diadem,
Descend from the high rank which thou hast borne;
Mercy ill suits with thy authority:
It checks thy growing power, and mars thy purpose.
What! Rome beneath thy laws, and suffer Cassius
To thwart thee thus; and Cimber, too, and Cinna;
Shall senators like these, obscure and low,
Talk thus before the sovereign of mankind?
The vanquished wretches breathe, and brave their master?

CÆSAR.

My equals born, they yielded to my arms;
Too much above to fear them, I forgive
Their trembling at the yoke which they must bear.

ANTONY.

Marius had been less sparing of their blood,
And Sulla would have punished them.

CÆSAR.

That Sulla
Was a barbarian, born but to oppress:
Murder and rage were all his policy,
And all his grandeur: amidst sighs and groans,
And punishments and death, he governed Rome:
He was its terror, I would be its joy,
And its delight: I know the people well;
A day will change them; lavish of their love
And of their hatred; both are gained with ease:
My grandeur galls them, but my clemency
Attracts them still: 'tis policy to pardon
The foe that cannot hurt us, and an air
Of liberty will reconcile their minds,
And make their chains fit easy: I must cover
The pit with flowers, if I would draw them to it,
And soothe the tiger ere I bind him fast.
Yes, I will please them, even whilst I oppress,
Charm, and enslave them, and revenge myself
On every foe by forcing him to love me.

ANTONY.

You must be feared, or you will never reign.

CÆSAR.

In battle only Cæsar would be feared.

ANTONY.

The people will abuse thy easy nature.

CÆSAR.

I tell thee, no; the people worship me,

Behold that temple there, which Rome hath raised
To Cæsar's clemency.

ANTONY.

They'll raise another
Perhaps to vengeance: thou hast cause to dread
Their rancorous hearts, still cherished by despair,
Cruel by duty, and the slaves of Rome.
Cassius alarmed foresees that Antony
This day shall place the crown on Cæsar's head,
And even before thy face they murmured at it.
'Twere best to gain the most impetuous of them,
And win them to our interest: to prevent
All danger, Cæsar must constrain himself.

CÆSAR.

Could I have feared, I would have punished them;
Advise me not to make myself detested:
Cæsar has learned to fight, has learned to conquer,
But knows not how to punish: let us hence,
And, strangers to suspicion and revenge,
Rule without violence o'er the conquered world.

End of the First Act.

ACT II. SCENE I.

BRUTUS, ANTONY, DOLABELLA.

ANTONY.

This bitterness of hate, this proud refusal,
Breathes less of virtue than of savage fierceness:
Cæsar's indulgence, his high rank and power,
At least deserved a milder treatment from you,
And more complacency; you might at least

Have talked with him: did you but know with whom
You are at variance, you would shudder at it—

BRUTUS.

I shudder now; but 'tis at hearing thee;
Foe to thy country, which thou hast betrayed
And sold to Cæsar, thinkest thou to deceive
Or to corrupt me? go, and cringe to him,
Fawn on your haughty lord. I know your arts,
You long to be a slave; you want a king.
Yet you are Roman.

ANTONY.

Brutus, I'm a friend,
And boast a heart that loves humanity:
I am contented with this humble virtue:
But thou wouldst be a hero, yet art naught
But a barbarian; and thy savage pride
Grew fond of virtue, but to make us loathe her.

SCENE II.

BRUTUS.

[*Alone.*

What baseness, heaven! what ignominious slaves!
Behold, my wretched country, your support,
Horatius, Decius, and thou great avenger
Of sacred laws, Brutus, my kindred blood,
Behold your successors; just gods, are these
The noble relics of our Roman grandeur?
We kiss the hand that binds us to the yoke;
Cæsar has ravished even our virtues from us:
I look for Rome, but find it now no more.
O ye immortal heroes, ye who fell
In her defence, whose images now strike

My soul with awe, and fill my eyes with tears,
The family of Pompey, and thou Cato,
Thou last of Scipio's glorious race, I feel
A lively spark of your immortal virtues
Rebound from you, and animate my heart:
You live in Brutus still, and in his breast
Have left the honor of the Roman name
The tyrant would have stolen. What do I see,
Great Pompey, at thy statue's foot? a paper.
[*He takes the paper and reads.*
Brutus, thou sleepest, and Rome's in chains.
O Rome,
My eyes are ever open still for thee;
Reproach me not for chains which I abhor.
Another paper! *No: thou art not Brutus:*
Cruel reflection! Tyrant Cæsar, tremble,
This stroke must end thee: *no: thou art not Brutus,*
I am, I will be Brutus; I will perish,
Or set my country free: Rome still, I see,
Has virtuous hearts: she calls for an avenger,
And has her eyes on Brutus; she awakens
My sleeping soul, and shakes my tardy hand:
She calls for blood, and shall be satisfied.

SCENE III.

BRUTUS, CASSIUS, CINNA, CASCA, DECIMUS, *Attendants*

CASSIUS.

'Tis the last time we may embrace, my friends.
Buried beneath the ruins of his country,
Cassius must fall; Cæsar can ne'er forgive me;
He knows our hearts, he knows our resolution;

Our souls, untainted by corruption, thwart
His purposes; in us he will destroy
The last of Romans: yes, my friends, 'tis past;
Our laws, our country, and our honor's lost;
Rome is no more; he triumphs over her,
And o'er mankind; our thoughtless ancestors
But fought for Cæsar, but for Cæsar conquered:
The spoils of kings, the sceptre of the world,
Six hundred years of virtues, toils, and war,
Were spent for Cæsar; he enjoys the fruit
Of all our dear-bought victories: O my Brutus,
Wert thou, too, born to crouch beneath a master?
Our liberty is gone.

BRUTUS.

It will revive.

CASSIUS.

What sayest thou? hark! did you not hear a shout?

BRUTUS.

'Twas the vile rabble: think not of them, Cassius.

CASSIUS.

Didst thou say, liberty—that noise again!

SCENE IV.

BRUTUS, CASSIUS, DECIMUS, CIMBER.

CASSIUS.

Ah! Cimber, is it thou? speak, what hath happened?

DECIMUS.

Some new attempt on liberty and Rome?
What has thou seen?

CIMBER.

Our shame. When haughty Cæsar
Came to the temple, he looked down upon us
Even like the thunderer, Capitolian Jove;
Then proudly told us of his bold design
Of adding Persia to the Roman empire:
The people knelt before their idol, called him
Rome's great avenger, conqueror of the world;
But Cæsar wanted yet another title
To gratify his insolent ambition;
When, lo! amidst this scene of adulation,
Came Antony, and bustled through the crowd
That stood 'twixt him and Cæsar; in his hand
A crown and sceptre: when, O shameful act,
Disgraceful to a Roman! whilst we stood
In silent admiration, unabashed,
He placed the crown on Cæsar's head; then knelt,
And cried out, "Cæsar, live and reign o'er us,
And o'er the world:" our Romans, as he spake,
Turned pale, and with their cries tumultuous wrung
The temple's vaulted roof: some fled with terror,
Whilst others blushing stood, and wept their fate.
Cæsar, who read resentment in their looks,
And indignation but too visible,
With well-dissembled modesty, took off
The radiant crown, and rolled it at his feet.
Instant the scene was changed, and every Roman
Welcomed with smiles returning liberty,
Ill-founded hopes, and momentary joy!
Antony seemed astonished: Cæsar still
Blushed and dissembled; and the more he strove
To hide his grief, the more was he applauded.
By moderation he would veil his crimes,
Affects to scorn the crown, and spurn it from him:
But, spite of all his efforts to conceal it,

Was galled within to hear the people praise him
For virtues which he never will possess.
No longer able to conceal his rage
And disappointment, with contracted brow
He left the capitol, and in an hour
The senate must attend him: an hour hence
Shall Cæsar change the state of Rome: thou knowest,
O Brutus! half our senate is corrupted,
Have bought their country, and will sell it now
To Cæsar: they are far more infamous
Even than the people, who at least abhor
The name of king: Cæsar, already vested
With regal power, yet wishes for the crown;
The people have refused him, but the senate
Bestow it on him: what remains?

CASSIUS.

To die;
To end a life of misery and reproach:
I've dragged it on whilst yet a ray of hope
Dawned on my country, but her latest hour
Is come, and Cassius never shall survive her.
Let others weep for Rome, I can't avenge
My country's cause, but I can perish with her.
I go where all our gods—O Scipio, Pompey,
'Tis time to follow you, and imitate
Great Cato.

BRUTUS.

No: we'll not be followers,
But bright examples: the world's eye, my friends,
Is fixed on us; be it our part to answer
The great expectance of our bleeding country.
Had Cato taken my counsel, he had fallen
More nobly, and the tyrant's blood had flowed

Mixed with his own: he turned his blameless hand
Against himself; but little did his death
Avail mankind: Cato did all for glory,
And nothing for his country: there, my friends,
There only erred the greatest of mankind.

CASSIUS.

What can we do in this disastrous crisis?

BRUTUS.

[*Shows the paper.*
See what was wrote to me, and learn our duty.

CASSIUS.

The same reproach was sent to me.

BRUTUS.

It shows
We had deserved it.

CIMBER.

Quick, the fatal hour
Approaches, when a tyrant shall destroy
The Roman name: one hour, and all is gone.

BRUTUS.

One hour, and Cæsar—dies.

CASSIUS.

Ha! now thou art
What Brutus should be.

DECIMUS.

Worthy of thy race,
The scourge of tyrants; thou hast spoke the thoughts
Of my own heart.

CASSIUS.

O Brutus, thou revivest me;
'Twas what my sorrows, what my rage expected
From thy exalted virtue; Rome inspires
The great design; thy voice alone decrees
The death of tyrants: O my dearest Brutus,
Let us blot out this infamous reproach
On all mankind, and whilst Jove's thunder sleeps,
Avenge the capitol. What say ye, Romans,
Have ye the same unconquerable heart,
The same desires?

CIMBER.

Cassius, we think with you,
Despise the thought of life, abhor the tyrant;
We love our country, and we will avenge her.
If there's a spark of Roman virtue left,
Brutus and Cassius will revive it.

DECIMUS.

Born
The guardians of the state, the great avengers
Of every crime, too long the oppressive hand
Of power hath galled us, and 'twere added guilt
To spare the tyrant, or suspend the blow:
Say, whom shall we admit to share this honor?

BRUTUS.

We are ourselves enough to save our country.
Emilius, Dolabella, Lepidus
And Bibulus, are all the slaves of Cæsar.
Cicero may serve us with his eloquence,
And that alone; he can harangue the senate,
But is too timid in the hour of danger:
He'll talk for Rome, but is not fit to avenge her:
We'll leave the orator who charms his country
The task of praising us when we have saved it.

With you alone, my friends, will I partake
This glorious danger, this immortal honor:
The senate are to meet him an hour hence,
There I'll surprise, destroy him there: this sword,
Deep in his bosom buried, shall avenge
Cato, and Pompey, and the Roman people:
I know the attempt is perilous and bold:
His watchful guards are placed on every side:
The changeful people, fluttering and inconstant,
Are doubtful whether they should love or hate him.
Death seems, my friends, to be our certain fate:
But O how glorious such a death will be!
How much to be desired! how noble is it
To fall in such a cause, to see our blood
Flow with the blood of tyrants; with what pleasure
Shall we behold this last illustrious hour!
Yes, let us die, my friends, but die with Cæsar;
And may that liberty his crimes oppress
Rise from his ashes, and forever flourish!

CASSIUS.

Debate not then, but to the capitol
Let us away; there he has injured us,
And there 'tis fit he should be sacrificed:
Fear not the people, though they are doubtful now,
Whene'er the idol falls, they will detest him.

BRUTUS.

Swear then with me upon this sword; all swear
By Cato's blood, by Pompey's, by the shades
Of those brave Romans who in Afric's plains
Fell glorious; swear by all the avenging gods
Of Rome, that Cæsar by your hands shall die.

CASSIUS.

Let us do more, my friends; here let us swear
To root out all who, like himself, shall strive

To govern here: sons, brothers, fathers, all,
If they are tyrants, Brutus, are our foes:
A true republican has neither son,
Father, nor brother, but the commonweal,
His gods, the laws, his virtue, and his country.

BRUTUS.

Forever let me join my blood with yours;
All linked together in one sacred knot,
The adopted sons of Liberty and Rome,
We'll seal our union with the tyrant's blood.

[*Advancing towards the statue of Pompey.*

By you, illustrious heroes, who excite
Our duty and inspire the great design,
O Pompey, at thy sacred knees, we swear,
Naught for ourselves we do, but all for Rome,
We swear to be united for our country;
We swear to live, to fight, and die together.
Let us be gone: away: we've staid too long.

SCENE V.

CÆSAR, BRUTUS.

CÆSAR.

Stop, Brutus, I must talk with thee; attend:
Where wouldst thou fly?

BRUTUS.

From tyranny, and thee.

CÆSAR.

Lictors, detain him.

BRUTUS.

Thou wouldst have my life,
Take it.

CÆSAR.

No: Brutus, had I wanted that,
Thou knowest, I could command it with a word,
And thou hast merited no better fate:
It is the pride of thy ungrateful heart
Still to offend me; and I find thee here
Amongst those Romans whose dark perfidy
I most suspect, with those who proudly dared
To blame my conduct, and defy my power.

BRUTUS.

They talked like Romans, gave thee noble counsel;
Hadst thou been wise, thou wouldst have followed it.

CÆSAR.

Yet I'll be calm, and bear thy insolence,
Will stoop beneath myself, and talk to thee.
What layest thou to my charge?

BRUTUS.

A ravaged world,
The blood of nations, and thy plundered country;
Thy power, thy specious virtues that gild o'er
Thy crimes, thy fatal clemency, that makes
Thy chains so easy, a destructive charm
To soothe thy captives, and deceive mankind.

CÆSAR.

Reproach like this had suited Pompey well;
He whose dissembled virtues have betrayed thee,
That haughty citizen, more fatal far,
Would not admit even Cæsar as his equal.
Thinkest thou, if he had conquered, his proud soul
Had left secure the liberty of Rome?
He would have ruled you with a rod of iron,
What then had Brutus done?

BRUTUS.

He would have slain him.

CÆSAR.

Is that the fate which Cæsar must expect
From thee? thou answerest not. O Brutus, Brutus,
Thou livest but for my ruin.

BRUTUS.

If thou thinkest so,
Prevent my fury. What withholds thee?

CÆSAR.

[*Giving him the letter from Servilia.*

Nature,
And my own heart: read there, ungrateful, read
And know whose blood thou hast opposed to mine;
See whom thou hatest, and if thou darest, go on.

BRUTUS.

[*Reading.*

What have I read? where am I? do my eyes
Deceive me?

CÆSAR.

Now, my son, my Brutus.

BRUTUS.

Cæsar
My father, gracious gods!

CÆSAR.

Ungrateful, yes,
I am thy father: whence this deadly silence?
Why sobbest thou thus, my son? Why do I hold thee
Thus in my arms mute and insensible?
Nature alarms, but cannot soften thee.

BRUTUS.

O dreadful fate! it drives me to despair:
My oaths! my country! Rome forever dear!
Cæsar—alas! I've lived too long.

CÆSAR.

O speak,
I see thy heart is laboring with remorse
And anguish: O hide nothing from me: still
Thou art silent: does the sacred name of son
Offend thee, Brutus? art thou fearful of it?
Fearest thou to love me, to partake my fortunes?
Is Cæsar's blood so hateful to thee! Oh,
This sceptre of the world, this power supreme,
For thee alone, that Cæsar, whom thou hatest,
Desired them: with Octavius and thyself
I wished but to divide the rich reward
Of all my labors, and the name of king.

BRUTUS.

O gods!

CÆSAR.

Thou canst not speak: these transports, Brutus,
Spring they from hatred, or from tenderness?
What secret weight hangs heavy on thy soul?

BRUTUS.

Cæsar—

CÆSAR.

Well, what?

BRUTUS.

I cannot speak to him.

CÆSAR.

Thou seemest as if thou durst not call me father.

BRUTUS.

O if thou art my father, grant me this,
This only boon.

CÆSAR.

Ask it: to give it thee
Will make me happy.

BRUTUS.

Kill me then this moment,
Or wish no more to be a king.

CÆSAR.

Away!
Barbarian, hence! unworthy of my love,
Unworthy of thy race, thou art no more
My son: go, henceforth I disclaim thee;
My heart shall take example from thy own,
And stifle nature's voice; shall learn of thee
To be inhuman: hence, I know thee not.
Think not I mean again to supplicate,
No, thou shalt see I've power to crush you all:
I will no longer listen to the pleas
Of mercy, but obey the laws of justice;
My easy heart is weary of forgiveness:
I'll act like Sulla now, like him be cruel,
And make you tremble at my vengeance: go,
Find out your vile seditious friends, they all
Insulted me, and all shall suffer for it:
They know what Cæsar can do, and shall find
What Cæsar dare: if I am barbarous,
Remember, thou alone hast made me so.

BRUTUS.

I must not leave him to his cruel purpose,
But save, if possible, my friends, and Cæsar.

End of the Second Act.

ACT III. SCENE I.

CASSIUS, CIMBER, DECIMUS, CINNA, CASCA, *with the rest of the Conspirators.*

CASSIUS.

At length the hour is come when Rome again
Shall breathe, again shall flourish; unoppressed
By tyrants, soon the mistress of the world
To freedom and to fame shall be restored.
Yours is the honor, Decimus, and Casca,
Cimber, and Probus, but one hour and Cæsar
Shall be no more: what Cato, Pompey, all
The power of Asia, never could perform,
We, my brave friends, alone shall execute;
We will avenge our country: on this day
Thus may we speak to all mankind: "Henceforth
Respect the state of Rome, for she is free."

CIMBER.

Behold thy friends all ready to obey thee;
To live or die with thee; to serve the senate;
To take the tyrant's life, or lose their own.

DECIMUS.

But where is Brutus, Cæsar's deadliest foe,
He who assembled, he who made us swear,
Who first shall plunge the dagger in his breast,
Why comes he not? The son-in-law of Cato
Should not have tarried thus; he may be stopped;
Cæsar perhaps may know—but see he comes;
Gods! what dejection in his aspect!

SCENE II.

To them BRUTUS.

CASSIUS.

Brutus,
What sinks thee thus? what new misfortune? say,
Doth Cæsar know it all? is Rome betrayed?

BRUTUS.

He knows not our design upon his life,
But trusts to you.

DECIMUS.

What then hath troubled thee?

BRUTUS.

A dreadful secret, that will make you tremble.

CASSIUS.

Cæsar's approaching death! perhaps our own!
Brutus, we all can die, but shall not tremble.

BRUTUS.

I will unveil it, and astonish thee.
Cæsar thou knowest is Brutus' foe; I've sworn
To kill him, fixed the time, the place, the moment
Of his destruction: 'tis but what I owe
To Rome, to you, and your posterity,
Nay, to the happiness of all mankind,
And the first blow must come from Brutus' hand:
All is prepared; and now let me inform thee,
That Brutus is—his son.

CIMBER.

The son of Cæsar!

CASSIUS.

His son!

DECIMUS.

O Rome!

BRUTUS.

Yes: Cæsar and Servilia
Married in private, Brutus was the fruit
Of their unhappy nuptials.

CIMBER.

Art thou then
A tyrant's son?

CASSIUS.

It cannot, must not be:
Thou art too much a Roman.

BRUTUS.

'Tis too true;
Ye see, my friends, the horror of my fate:
But I am yours, for sacred is my word:
Which of you all hath strength of mind sufficient,
With more than stoic courage, far above
The common race of men, to tell me how
Brutus should act? I yield me to your sentence:
All silent! all with downcast eyes! thou, Cassius,
Wilt not thou speak? no friendly hand stretched out
To save me from this horrid precipice!
Cassius, thou tremblest; thy astonished soul—

CASSIUS.

I tremble at the counsel I must give.

BRUTUS.

Yet speak.

CASSIUS.

Were Brutus one amongst the crowd
Of vulgar citizens, I should have said,
Go, be a brother tyrant, serve thy father,
Destroy that country which thou shouldst support;
Rome shall hereafter be revenged on both:
But I am talking to the noble Brutus,
The scourge of tyrants, whose unconquered heart
Hath not a drop of Cæsar's blood within it:
Thou knewest the traitor Catiline, whose rage
Was well nigh fatal to us all.

BRUTUS.

I did.

CASSIUS.

If on the day when that abhorred monster
Levelled the blow at liberty and Rome,
If when the senate had condemned the traitor
He had acknowledged Brutus for his son,
How wouldst thou then have acted?

BRUTUS.

Canst thou ask me?
Thinkest thou, my heart, thus in a moment changed,
Could balance 'twixt a traitor and my country!

CASSIUS.

Brutus, that word alone points out thy duty:
It is the senate's will, and Rome's in safety.
But say, hast thou indeed those secret checks
Which vulgar minds mistake for nature's voice,
And shall a word from Cæsar thus extinguish
Thy love for Rome, thy duty, and thy faith?
Or true or false the secret that he told thee,
Is he less guilty, art thou less a Roman,
Art thou not Brutus, though the son of Cæsar?

Is not thy hand, thy heart, thy honor pledged
To us and to thy country? If thou art
The tyrant's son, Rome is thy mother still,
We are thy brothers. Born as Brutus was
Within these sacred walls, the adopted son
Of Cato, bred by Scipio and by Pompey,
The friend of Cassius, what wouldst thou desire?
These are thy noblest titles, and another
Would but disgrace them: what if Cæsar, smit
With lawless passion for the fair Servilia,
Seduced her to his arms, and gave thee birth,
Bury thy mother's follies in oblivion:
'Twas Cato formed thy noble soul to virtue,
And Cato is thy father; therefore loose
The shameful tie that binds thee to another:
Firm to thy oaths and to thy cause remain,
And own no parents but the world's avengers.

BRUTUS.

My noble friends, to you I next appeal.

CIMBER.

By Cassius judge of us, by us of Cassius:
Could we think otherwise, of all Rome's sons
We were most guilty: but why ask of us
What thy own breast can best inform thee? Brutus
Alone can tell what Brutus ought to do.

BRUTUS.

Now then, my friends, I'll lay my heart before you,
With all its horrors; O 'tis deeply wounded,
And tears have flowed even from a stoic's eye:
After the dreadful oath which I have made
To serve my country, and to kill my father,
I weep to see myself the son of Cæsar,
Admire his virtues, and condemn his crimes,

Lament the hero, and abhor the tyrant,
Pity and horror rend my troubled soul;
I wish that fate you have prepared for him
Would fall on Brutus: but I'll tell you more,
Know, I esteem him, and 'midst all his crimes,
His nobleness of heart has won me to him:
If Rome could e'er submit to regal power,
He is the only tyrant we should spare.
Be not alarmed; that name alone secures me,
Rome and the senate have my faith, the welfare
Of all mankind declares against a king.
Yes, I embrace the virtuous task with horror,
And tremble at it, but I will be faithful:
I go to talk with Cæsar, and perhaps
To change and soften him, perhaps to save
Rome and himself: O may the gods bestow
Persuasive utterance on my lips, and power
To move his soul; but if in vain I plead
The cause of liberty, if Cæsar still
Is deaf to my entreaties, strike, destroy him,
I'll not betray my country for my father.
The world, astonished, may approve or blame
My cruel firmness, and this deed hereafter
Be called a deed of horror, or of glory;
My soul is not ambitious of applause,
Or fearful of reproach; a Roman still,
And independent, to the voice of duty
And that alone I listen; for the rest,
'Tis equal all; away; be slaves no longer.

CASSIUS.

The welfare of the state depends on thee,
And on thy sacred word we shall rely,
As if great Cato and the gods of Rome
Had promised to defend us.

SCENE III.

BRUTUS.

[*Alone.*

Cæsar comes
Even now to meet me, 'tis the appointed hour,
And this the place, even in the capitol,
Where he must die: let me not hate him, gods!
O stop this arm uplifted to destroy him,
Inspire his noble heart with love of Rome,
And if he is my father, make him just!
He comes: I have not power to speak, or move,
Great spirit of Cato, now support my virtue!

SCENE IV.

CÆSAR, BRUTUS.

CÆSAR.

Brutus, we're met: what wouldst thou? hast thou yet
A human heart? art thou the son of Cæsar.

BRUTUS.

I am, if Cæsar be the son of Rome.

CÆSAR.

Was it for this, thou proud republican,
We met together? comest thou to insult me?
Not all my bounties showered upon thy head,
Glory and empire, and a subject world,
Waiting to pay thee homage, naught can move
Thy stubborn heart: what thinkest thou of a crown?

BRUTUS.

I think on it with horror.

CÆSAR.

Prejudice
And passion blind thee, I excuse thy weakness;
But canst thou hate me?

BRUTUS.

No: I love thee, Cæsar;
Thy noble deeds long since inclined my heart
To reverence thee; before thou hadst disclosed
The secret of my birth, I wept to see thee
At once the glory and the scourge of Rome:
Would Cæsar be a Roman citizen,
I should adore him, and would sacrifice
My life and fortune to defend his cause;
But Cæsar, as a king, I must abhor.

CÆSAR.

What dost thou hate me for?

BRUTUS.

Thy tyranny.
O listen to the counsel, to the prayers,
The tears of Rome, the senate, and thy son;
Wouldst thou desire to be the first of men?
Wouldst thou enjoy a right superior far
To all that war and conquest can bestow?
Wouldst thou be more than king, nay more than
Cæsar—

CÆSAR.

What's to be done?

BRUTUS.

Thou seest the world enslaved,
Bound to thy chariot; break their chains in sunder,
Renounce the diadem, and be a Roman.

CÆSAR.

What hast thou bade me do?

BRUTUS.

What Sulla did
Before thee; he had waded in our blood,
He made Rome free, and all was soon forgotten;
Deep as his hands were dipped in deadly slaughter,
He left the throne, and washed his crimes away.
Thou hadst not Sulla's cruelty and rage,
Adopt his virtues then; thy heart, we know,
Can pardon, therefore can thy heart do more;
'Tis Rome thou must forgive: then shalt thou reign
As Cæsar should, then Brutus is thy son:
Still do I plead in vain?

CÆSAR.

Rome wants a master,
As one day thou perhaps mayest dearly prove.
Brutus, our laws should with our manners change;
That liberty thou dotest on is no more
Than the fool's right to hurt himself, and Rome,
That spread destruction round the world, now seems
To work her own; the great Colossus falls,
And in her ruin buries half mankind:
To me she stretches forth her feeble arm
To aid her in her perils. Since the days
Of Sulla, all our virtue's lost; the laws,
Rome, and the state, are naught but empty names.
Alas! thou talkest in these corrupted times
As if the Decii, and Æmilii lived;
Cato deceived thee, and thy fatal virtue
Will but destroy thy country, and thyself;
Submit thy reason to the conqueror
Of Cato and of Pompey, to a father
Who loves thee, Brutus, who laments thy errors;

Give me thy heart, and be indeed my son:
Take other steps, and force not nature thus
Against thyself: not answer me, my Brutus,
But turn thy eyes away?

BRUTUS.

I'm not myself:
Strike me, ye gods! O Cæsar—

CÆSAR.

Thou are moved,
I see thou art, my son; thy softened soul—

BRUTUS.

Thy life's in danger; knowest thou that, my father?
Knowest thou, there's not a Roman then but wishes
In secret to destroy thee? let thy own,
Thy country's safety, plead my cause: by me
Thy genius speaks, it throws me at thy feet,
And presses for thy welfare; in the name
Of all those gods thou hast so late forgotten,
Of all thy virtues, in the name of Rome;
Shall I yet add the tender name of son,
A son who trembles for thee, who prefers
To Cæsar Rome alone, O hear, and save me!

CÆSAR.

Leave me, my Brutus, leave me.

BRUTUS.

Be persuaded.

CÆSAR.

The world may change, but Cæsar never will.

BRUTUS.

This is thy answer then?

CÆSAR.

I am resolved;
Rome must obey, when Cæsar hath determined.

BRUTUS.

Then fare thee well.

CÆSAR.

Ha! wherefore? stay, my son,
Thou weepest, can Brutus weep? is it because
Thou hast a king? dost thou lament for Rome?

BRUTUS.

I weep for thee, and thee alone; farewell!

[*Exit Brutus.*

CÆSAR.

Heroic virtue! how I envy Brutus!
Would I could love like him the commonweal!

SCENE V.

CÆSAR, DOLABELLA, ROMANS.

DOLABELLA.

Cæsar, the senate, at the temple met
By thy command, await thee, and the throne
Already is prepared, the people throng
Around thy statues, and the senate fix
Their wavering minds; but, if I might be heard
If Cæsar would give ear to one who loves him,
A fellow-soldier and a friend, to augurs,
To dreadful omens, to the gods themselves,
He would defer the great event.

CÆSAR.

Away:

Defer such glorious business! lose a crown!
What power shall stop me?

DOLABELLA.

Nature doth conspire
With heaven to blast thy purpose, and foretell
Thy death.

CÆSAR.

No matter, Cæsar's but a man;
Nor do I think that heaven would e'er disturb
The course of nature, or the elements
Rise in confusion, to prolong the life
Of one poor mortal; by the immortal gods
Our days are numbered; we must yield to fate;
Cæsar has nought to fear.

DOLABELLA.

Cæsar has foes,
And this new yoke may gall them; what if these
Conspire against thee!

CÆSAR.

O they dare not do it.

DOLABELLA.

Thy heart's too confident.

CÆSAR.

Such poor precautions
Would make me look contemptible, perhaps
Would do me little service.

DOLABELLA.

For Rome's safety
Cæsar should live: at least permit thy friend
To attend thee to the senate.

CÆSAR.

No: why alter
Our first resolve? why hasten the decrees
Of fate? who changes only shows his weakness.

DOLABELLA.

I quit thee with regret, and own I fear.
Alas! my heart beats heavily.

CÆSAR.

Away.
Better to die than be afraid of death:
Farewell.

SCENE VI.

DOLABELLA, ROMANS.

DOLABELLA.

What hero better could deserve
The homage of mankind? O join with me,
Ye Romans, to admire and honor Cæsar;
Live to obey, and die to serve him—heaven!
What noise is that, what dreadful clamors!

The CONSPIRATORS.

[*Behind the scenes.*

Die,
Die, tyrant: courage, Cassius.

DOLABELLA.

Fly, and save him.

SCENE VII.

CASSIUS, *a dagger in his hand,* DOLABELLA, ROMANS.

CASSIUS.

The deed is done: he's dead.

DOLABELLA.

Assist me, Romans,
Strike, kill the traitor.

CASSIUS.

Hear me, countrymen,
I am your friend, and your deliverer,
Have broke your chains, and set the nation free:
The conquerors of the world are now the sons
Of liberty.

DOLABELLA.

O Romans, shall the blood
Of Cæsar—

CASSIUS.

I have slain my friend, to serve
The cause of Rome; he would have made you slaves,
And therefore have I slain him: is there one
Amongst you all, so base, so mean of soul,
As to be fond of slavery, and regret
A tyrant's loss? is there one Roman left
That wishes for a king? if one there be,
Let him appear, let him complain to Cassius;
But ye are fond of glory all, I know
Ye are, and will applaud me for the deed.

ROMANS.

Perish his memory! Cæsar was a tyrant.

CASSIUS.

Preserve these generous sentiments, ye sons
Of happy Rome, ye masters of the world;
Antony means, I know, to tamper with you,
But you'll remember, he was Cæsar's slave,
Bred up beneath him from his infant years,
And in corruption's school has learned from him
The tyrant's art; he comes to vindicate
His master, and to justify his crimes;
Contemns you all, and thinks he can deceive you:
He has a right to speak, and must be heard,
Such is the law of Rome, and to the laws
I shall submit; but in the people still
Is lodged the power supreme, to judge of Cæsar,
Of Antony, and me: ye now once more
Possess those rights which had been wrested from you,
Which Cæsar took, and Cassius hath restored:
He will confirm them: but I go, my friends,
To meet great Brutus at the capitol;
To those deserted walls once more to bring
Long absent justice, and our exiled gods;
To calm the rage of faction, and repair
The ruins of our liberty: for you,
I ask you but to know your happiness,
And to enjoy it: let no artifice
Deceive you, but beware of Antony.

ROMANS.

If he speak ill of Cassius, he shall die.

CASSIUS.

Romans, remember these your sacred oaths.

ROMANS.

The friends of Rome shall ever be our care.

SCENE VIII.

ANTONY, ROMANS, DOLABELLA.

First ROMAN.

But Antony appears.

Second ROMAN.

What can he dare
To offer?

First ROMAN.

See, his eyes are bathed in tears;
Hark, how he sighs, he's deeply troubled.

Second ROMAN.

Oh,
He loved him but too well.

ANTONY.

I did indeed;
I loved him, Romans, would have given my life
To save my friend's; and who amongst you all
Would not have died for Cæsar, had you known,
Like me, his virtues? to the laws he fell
A noble sacrifice: I come not here
To gild his memory with a flattering tale,
The world was witness to his deeds, the world
Proclaims his glory; I but ask your pity,
And beg you to forgive the tears of friendship.

First ROMAN.

Cassius, you might have shed them for your country,
For Rome in slavery; Cæsar was a hero,
But Cæsar was a tyrant too.

Second ROMAN.

A tyrant
Could have no virtues: Cassius was our friend,
And so was Brutus.

ANTONY.

I have naught to urge
Against his murderers; they meant, no doubt,
To serve the state; whilst generous Cæsar poured
His bounties on their heads, they shed his blood;
But, had he not been guilty, Rome would ne'er
Have acted thus, he must have been to blame:
And yet, did Cæsar ever make you groan
Beneath his power? did he oppress his country?
Did he reserve the fruit of all his conquests
But for himself, or did you share the spoil?
Were not the treasures of the conquered world
Laid at your feet, and lavished all on you?
When he beheld his weeping countrymen,
From his triumphal car he would descend
To soothe their griefs, and wipe their tears away.
What Cæsar fought for, Rome in peace enjoys;
Rich by his bounty, by his virtues great;
He paid the service and forgot the wrongs
Which he received; immortal gods! you knew
His heart was ever ready to forgive.

ROMANS.

Cæsar was always merciful.

ANTONY.

Alas!
Could his great soul have ever stooped to vengeance
He yet had lived, and we had still been happy.
Not one of all his murderers but shared
His bounties; twice had he preserved the life

Of Cassius—Brutus—horrible to think!
O heaven! my friends, I shudder at the crime,
The base assassin, Brutus, was—his son.

ROMANS.

His son! ye gods!

ANTONY.

I see, it shocks your souls,
I see the tears that trickle down your cheeks:
Yes; Brutus is his son: but you, my friends,
You were his children, his adopted sons:
O had ye seen his will!

ROMANS.

What is it? tell us.

ANTONY.

Rome is his heir; his treasures are your own,
And you will soon enjoy them: O he wished
To serve his Romans, even beyond the grave:
'Twas you alone he loved, for you had gone
To sacrifice his fortune and his life
In Asia's plains: "O Romans," oft he cried,
"You are my sovereigns, I am the world's master,
And you are mine." Could Brutus have done more,
Or Cassius?

ROMANS.

We detest them.

First ROMAN.

Cæsar was
The father of his country.

ANTONY.

But he's gone;
Your father is no more: the pride, the glory
Of human nature, the delight of Rome,

Cut off by vile assassins; shall he go
Unhonored, undistinguished to the tomb?
Shall we not raise the funeral pile to one
So dear, the father, and the friend of Rome?
Behold, they bring him here.

[*The farther part of the stage opens, and discovers the lictors carrying the body of Cæsar, covered with a bloody robe; Antony descends from the rostrum, and kneels down near the body.*

ROMANS.

O dreadful sight!

ANTONY.

Behold the poor remains of Cæsar! once
The first of men, that god whom you adored,
Whom even his murderers loved, your best support,
In peace your guardian, and in war your glory,
Who made whole nations tremble, and the world
Bow down before him: is this he, ye Romans,
This bleeding corse, is this the mighty Cæsar?
Mark but his wounds: here Cimber pierced him, there
The perjured Cassius, and there Decimus;
There, with unnatural hand, the cruel Brutus
Deep plunged the fatal poniard: Cæsar looked
Towards his murderer, with an eye of love
And mild forgiveness, as he sunk in death
He called him by the tender name of son;
"My child," he cried——

First ROMAN.

The monster! O that heaven
Had taken him hence before this fatal deed!

[*The people crowd round the body.*

The blood still flows.

THE DEATH OF CÆSAR

THE PRODIGAL

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Old EUPHEMON.
Young EUPHEMON.
FIERENFAT, President of Cognac, second son of Euphemon.
RONDON, a Citizen of Cognac.
LISE, Daughter of Rondon.
MARTHA, Chambermaid to Lise.
JASMIN, Valet to young Euphemon.

Scene, COGNAC.

This piece was produced in 1736, anonymously, and was a great success.

THE PRODIGAL.

ACT I. SCENE I.

EUPHEMON, RONDON.

RONDON.

Come, come, cheer up, my old, melancholy friend, how happy will it make me to see you merry again! and merry we will be: what a pleasure it is to think my daughter will revive your drooping family! But this same son of ours, this Master Fierenfat, seems to me to behave strangely in the affair.

EUPHEMON.

How so!

RONDON.

Puffed up with his presidentship, he makes love by weight and measure: a young fellow putting on the gray beard, and dictating to us like a Cato, is, in my opinion, a mighty ridiculous animal; I would prefer a fool to a coxcomb at any time; in short, brother, he is too proud, and self-sufficient.

EUPHEMON.

And let me tell you, brother, you are a little too hasty.

RONDON.

I cannot help it; it is my nature: I love truth, I love to hear it, and I love to speak it: I love now and then to reprove my son-in-law, to rate him for

his coxcombial, pedantic airs: to be sure, you acted like a wise father, to turn your elder son out of doors; that gamester, that wild rake-helly profligate, to make room for this prudent younger brother; to place all your hopes on this promising youth, and buy a presidentship for him. O 'twas a wise act no doubt: but the moment he became Mr. President, by my troth, he was stuffed up with vanity and impertinence: he goes like clock-work, walks and talks in time, and says he has a great deal more wit than I have, who, you know, brother, have a great deal more than you: he is—

EUPHEMON.

Nay, nay, what a strange humor this is! must you always be—

RONDON.

Well, well, no matter; what does it signify? all these faults are nothing when people are rich: he is, as I was going to say, covetous, and every covetous man is wise: O it is an excellent vice for a husband, a most delightful vice. Come, come, this very day he must be my son-in-law; Lise shall be his: it only remains now, my dear sorrowful friend, that you make over all your goods and chattels, hereditary or acquired, present and future, to your son, only reserving to yourself a moderate income: let everything be signed and sealed as soon as possible, that this same young gentleman of yours may throw a good fortune into our laps, without which my daughter will most certainly look another way for a husband.

EUPHEMON.

I have promised you, sir, and I will keep my word: yes, Fierenfat shall have everything I am

possessed of: the sad remainder of my unhappy life shall glide away silently in some distant retreat: but I cannot help wishing that one, for whom I design my all, was less eager to enjoy it: I have seen the mad debauchery of one son, and now behold with concern the soul of the other devoted to interest.

RONDON.

So much the better, man, so much the better.

EUPHEMON.

O my dear friend, I was born to be an unfortunate father.

RONDON.

Let me have none of your lamentations, your sighs, and your groans: what! do you want your elder hopeful to come back, that prodigal spendthrift, to spoil all our pleasure at once, and drop in like a trouble-feast on the day of marriage?

EUPHEMON.

No, no.

RONDON.

Would you have him come, and swear the house down?

EUPHEMON.

No.

RONDON.

Beat you, and run away with my daughter, with my dear Lise; my Lise, who—

EUPHEMON.

Long may that charming maid be preserved from such wicked fellows!

RONDON.

Do you want him to come again to plunder his father? Do you want to give him your estate?

EUPHEMON.

No, no: his brother shall have it all.

RONDON.

Ay! or my daughter will have none of him.

EUPHEMON.

To-day he shall have Lise, and all my fortune: his brother will have nothing of me but the anger of a father, whom he hath grievously injured: he has deserved my hatred; an unnatural boy!

RONDON.

Indeed you bore with him too long; the other at least has acted with discretion: but as for him, he was a profligate: my God, what a libertine! Do you not remember, ha! ha! that was a droll trick enough, when he robbed you of your clothes, horses, linen, and movables, to equip his little *Jourdain,* who left him the very next morning. Many a time have I laughed at that, I own.

EUPHEMON.

O what pleasure can you find in repeating my misfortunes?

RONDON.

And then his staking twenty rouleaux upon an ace; O dear! O dear!

EUPHEMON.

Have done with this.

RONDON.

Don't you remember, when he was to have been betrothed to my little Lise in the face of the church, where he had hid himself, and upon whose account, too?—the debauched rogue!

EUPHEMON.

Spare me the remembrance, good Rondon, of these unhappy circumstances, that only set his conduct in the worst light: am I not already unfortunate enough? I left my own house, the place of my nativity, on purpose to remove as far as possible from my thoughts the memory of a misfortune, which, whenever it recurs, distracts me. Your business led you to this place; we have entered into a connection with, and friendship for, each other; let me entreat you, Rondon, make the proper use of it. You are always repeating truths of some kind or other; but let me tell you, truth is not always agreeable.

RONDON.

Well, well, it is agreed; I say no more; I ask pardon; but surely the devil was in you, when you knew his violent temper, to make a soldier of him.

EUPHEMON.

Again!

RONDON.

Forgive me, but really you ought—

EUPHEMON.

I know it: I know I ought to forget everything but my younger son, and his marriage: but tell me sincerely, Rondon, think you he has been able to gain your daughter's heart?

RONDON.

O no doubt of it: my girl is a girl of honor, and will be obedient to her father: if I tell her she must fall in love, her little docile heart, which I can turn and wind just as I please, falls in love immediately, without any arguing about the matter: I know how to manage her, I warrant you.

EUPHEMON.

I have notwithstanding some doubts about her obedience in this affair, and am greatly mistaken if she answers your expectation: my elder son had a place in her affections: I know how strong the first impressions of love are upon a tender heart; they are not worn out in a day; indeed, my friend, they are not.

RONDON.

Nonsense, nonsense.

EUPHEMON.

Say what you please, that wild fellow knew how to be agreeable.

RONDON.

Not he indeed: he was nobody: a poor creature: no, no; never you fear that: after his behavior to you, I bade my daughter never to think of him any more; therefore set your heart at rest. When I say no, who shall dare to say yes? But you shall see, here she comes.

SCENE II.

EUPHEMON, RONDON, LISE, MARTHA.

RONDON.

Come hither, my dear: this day, my dear, is a grand holiday for you, I am sure; for this day I intend to give you a husband: now tell me, my little Lise, be he old or young, handsome or ugly, grave or gay, rich or poor, shall you not have the strongest desire to please him? have you not already an inclination for him? are you not in love with him?

LISE.

No, sir.

RONDON.

How, gipsy—

EUPHEMON.

O ho! my liege: why, your power is a little on the decline. What is become of your despotic authority!

RONDON.

Ha! how is this! what, after all I said to you, have you no passion for your future husband? no inclination? no—

LISE.

None in the least, sir.

RONDON.

Don't you know your duty obliges you to give him your whole heart?

LISE.

No, sir; I tell you, no. I know, sir, how far a heart, obedient to the dictates of virtue, is obliged by the solemn tie of marriage. I know, sir, it is a wife's duty to make herself as amiable as possible, and to endeavor to deserve a husband's tenderness; to make amends by goodness for what she wants in beauty; abroad to be discreet and prudent; at home, affable and agreeable; but, as for love, it is quite another thing: it will not endure slavery: inclination can never be forced, therefore never attempt it: to my husband I shall yield up everything—but my heart, and that he must deserve before he can possess it: depend upon it, that the heart will never be taught to love by the command of a father; no, nor be argued into it by reason, nor frightened into it by a lawyer.

EUPHEMON.

In my opinion, the girl talks sensibly, and I approve the justice of her argument: my son, I hope, will endeavor to make himself worthy of a heart so noble and so generous.

RONDON.

Hold your tongue, you old doting flatterer, you corrupter of youth: without your encouragement, the girl would never have thought of prating to me in this ridiculous manner.

[*To Lise.*

Hark ye, miss, I have provided you a husband, perhaps he may have a little of the coxcomb, and take upon him rather too much; but it is my business to correct my son-in-law, and yours to take him, such as he is: to love one another as well as you can, and obey me in everything, that's all you have to do: and

now, brother, let us go sign and seal with my scrivener, who will give us a hundred words where four would be sufficient: come, let us away, and rattle the old brawler: then will I come back, and scold my son, and your daughter, and yourself.

EUPHEMON.

Mighty well, sir: come along.

SCENE III.

LISE, MARTHA.

MARTHA.

My God! what an odd mixture it is! how strangely the old gentleman jumbles his ideas together!

LISE.

I am his daughter still; and his odd humors, after all, don't alter the goodness of his heart. Under this violence of passion, and air of resentment, he has still the soul of a father; nay, sometimes, even in the midst of his freaks, and while he is scolding me, he will take my advice: to be sure, when he finds fault with the husband he has provided for me, and tells me of the hazard I run in such a marriage, he is but too much in the right: but when, at the same time, he lays his commands on me to love him, then indeed he is most miserably wrong.

MARTHA.

How is it possible you should ever love this Monsieur Fierenfat? I'd sooner marry an old soldier, that swears, gets drunk, beats his wife, and yet loves

her, than a coxcomb of the long robe, fond of nobody but himself; who, with a grave tone and pedantic air, talks to his wife as if he was examining her in a court of justice; a peacock that is always looking at his own tail, who bridles under his band, and admires himself; a wretch who has even more covetousness than pride, and makes love to you as he counts out his money.

LISE.

Thou hast painted him to the life; but what can I do? I must submit to this marriage: we are not the disposers of our own fate: my parents, my fortune, my age, all conspire to force me into the bonds of wedlock. This Fierenfat, in spite of my dislike of him, is the only man here who can be my husband: he is the son of my father's friend, and I can't possibly shake him off. Alas! how few hearts are bestowed according to their own inclinations! I must yield: time and patience perhaps may conquer my disgust of him; I may reconcile myself to the yoke, and come at last to pass over his faults as I do my own.

MARTHA.

Mighty well resolved indeed, my beautiful and discreet mistress: but your heart, I am afraid, is not quite so open—O if I dared—but you have forbidden my ever mentioning—

LISE.

Whom?

MARTHA.

Euphemon—who, spite of all his vices, I know, had once an interest in your heart; who loved you.

LISE.

O never, never: mention no more a name which I detest.

MARTHA.

[*Going off.*

Well, well, I say no more about him.

LISE.

[*Pulling her back.*

It is true, his youth did for a little time betray me into a tenderness for him; but was he formed to make a virtuous woman happy?

MARTHA.

[*Going.*

A dangerous fool indeed, madam.

LISE.

[*Pulling her back.*

He met with too many corrupters to lead him astray, unhappy youth! he took his round of pleasures, but knew little, I believe, of love.

MARTHA.

And yet there was a time when you seemed to think you had caught him in the toils.

LISE.

If he had really loved, it might have reformed him; for, believe me, a real passion without disguise is the best curb on vice; and he who feels it, either is a worthy man, or soon will be so: but Euphemon despised his mistress, left love and tenderness for folly and debauchery. Those worthless villains, who pretended to be his friends, and drew him into the snare, after having exhausted all his mother's fortune, robbed his unhappy father, and laid it upon

him: to complete his misery, those vile seducers took him away from his father's protection, and snatched him from me; hid him forever from these eyes, which, bathed in tears, still lament his vices and his charms. I think no more about him.

MARTHA.

His brother, it seems, succeeds to his fortunes, and is to marry you; more's the pity, I say: t'other had a fine face, fair hair, a good leg, danced well, sang well, in short, was born for love.

LISE.

What are you talking of?

MARTHA.

Even in the midst of all his freaks and follies, all his strange conduct, one might see a fund of honor in his heart.

LISE.

There was; he seemed formed for virtue.

MARTHA.

Don't think, madam, I mean to flatter him: but to do him justice, he was not mean, nor servile; no railer, no sharper, no liar.

LISE.

No: but—

MARTHA.

Away: here comes his brother.

LISE.

Nay: we must stay now, it is too late to get off.

SCENE IV.

LISE, MARTHA, FIERENFAT, *the President.*

FIERENFAT.

To be sure, madam, this augmentation of fortune must make the match more agreeable: increase of riches is increase of happiness, and, as I may say, the very soul of housekeeping: fortune, honor, and dignity will not be wanting to the wife of M. Fierenfat. At Cognac, madam, you will have the precedency of the first ladies of the beau-monde, let me tell you, madam, no little satisfaction: you will hear them whispering as you go along, "There she goes, Madame la Presidente": really, madam, when I reflect upon my rank, my riches, the privilege of my high office, and all the good qualities I possess altogether, with my right of eldership which will be made over to me, I assure you, madam, I pay you no small compliment.

MARTHA.

Now, for my part, I am of another opinion: always to be talking of your quality, your rank, and your riches, is extremely ridiculous: a Midas and Narcissus at once, blown up with your pride, and contracted with avarice; always looking at yourself and your money; a petit-maitre with a band on; the most unnatural of all human creatures: a young coxcomb may pass off, but a young miser is—a monster.

FIERENFAT.

I believe, sweetheart, it is not you whom I am to marry to-day, but this lady; therefore, you will

please, madam, to trouble your head no more about us; silence will become you best.

[*Turning to Lise.*

You, madam, I hope, who in an hour or two are to be my wife, will, I hope, favor me so far as, before night, to dismiss this blustering body-guard of yours, who makes use of a chambermaid's privilege to give rein to her impertinence: but I would have her know I am not a President for nothing, and may, perhaps, lock her up for her own good.

MARTHA.

[*To Lise.*

Speak to him, madam, and defend me: if he locks me up, he may lock you up, too, for aught I know.

LISE.

[*Aside.*

I augur ill from all this.

MARTHA.

Speak to him then, and don't mutter.

LISE.

What can I say to him?

MARTHA.

Abuse him.

LISE.

No: I'll reason with him.

MARTHA.

That will never do, take my word for it; t'other's the better way.

SCENE V.

RONDON, FIERENFAT, LISE.

RONDON.

Upon my word, a pleasant affair this.

FIERENFAT.

What's the matter?

RONDON.

You shall hear. As I was tramping to your old gentleman with the parchments, I met him at the foot of this rock, talking with a traveller who had just alighted from a coach.

LISE.

A young traveller?

RONDON.

No: a toothless old fellow leaning on a crutch. I observed them rubbing their gray beards against each other for some time, shrugging up their humpbacks, and sighing most piteously; then they turned up the whites of their eyes, and fell to snivelling together: at last Euphemon, with a crabbed face, told me he had met with a great calamity, that at least he must have time to weep before he could sign the articles, and at that time could not talk to anybody.

FIERENFAT.

O I must go myself and comfort him: you know I can manage him as I please; besides, the affair is really my own concern; but as soon as he sees me with the contract in my hand, he will sign imme-

diately. Time is precious, and my new right of eldership a matter of importance.

LISE.

There is no hurry, sir, you need not be so impatient.

RONDON.

But I say he shall be in a hurry: all this is your doing, madam.

LISE.

How, sir! mine!

RONDON.

Yes, yours, madam. All the crosses and disappointments that make families unhappy, come from undutiful daughters.

LISE.

What have I done, sir, to disoblige you?

RONDON.

What have you done! turned everything topsy-turvy; put us all in confusion: but I'll let these two wiseacres lay their heads together a little, and then marry you off in spite of their teeth; in spite of yourself, too, if you provoke me.

End of the First Act.

ACT II. SCENE I.

LISE, MARTHA.

MARTHA.

I see this matrimony frightens you a little: this noise and bustle of preparation has something terrible in it.

LISE.

To say the truth, so it has; and the more I think on the weight of this yoke, the more this heart of mine trembles at it. Marriage, in my opinion, is the greatest good, or the greatest evil; there is no such thing as a medium in it: where hearts are united, where harmony of sentiment, taste and humor strengthen the bonds of nature, where love forms the tie, and honor gives a sanction to it, it is surely the happiest state which mortals can enjoy. What pleasure must it be to own your passion publicly, to bear the name of the dear beloved object of your wishes! your house, your servants, your livery, everything carrying with it some pleasing remembrance of the man you love; and then to see your children, those dear pledges of mutual affection, that form, as it were, another union: O such a marriage is a heaven upon earth: but to make a vile contract, to sell our name, our fortune, and our liberty, and submit them to the will of an arbitrary tyrant, and be only his first slave, an upper servant in his family; to be eternally jarring, or running away from one another, the day without joy, and the night without love; to be always afraid of doing what we should not do; to give way to our own bad inclinations, or to be continually opposing them; to be under the necessity either of deceiving an imperious husband or dragging out life in a languid state of troublesome duty and obedience; to mutter, and fret, and pine away with grief and discontent; O such a marriage is the hell of this world.

MARTHA.

The young ladies of this age have certainly, they say, some little demon, some familiar, to inspire

them! Why, what a deal of knowledge this girl has picked up in so short a time! the most expert, artful widow in Paris, that ever comforted herself with the thought of having buried three husbands, could not have talked more learnedly on this head than my young mistress here; but we must have a little *éclaircissement* with regard to this marriage, which it seems is so mighty disgusting: you don't approve of Monsieur le President, pray how should you like his brother? Come, unriddle the mystery to me. Has not the elder brother supplanted the younger? Come, whom do you love, or whom do you hate? Tell me the truth at once, and speak honestly.

LISE.

I know nothing about it: I cannot, dare not tell you the cause of my dislike. Why would you search for a melancholy truth at the bottom of a heart already but too deeply afflicted? We can never see ourselves in the water, whilst the tempest is howling around us; no; first let the storm be hushed, the wind calm, and the surface smooth.

MARTHA.

Comparisons, madam, will never pass for argument: it is easy enough sometimes to see the bottom of a heart, it's clear enough: and if the passions are now and then a little tempestuous, a young lady of understanding can generally guess from what corner the wind blows that has raised the storm. She knows well enough—

LISE.

I tell you, I know nothing; and I am resolved to shut my eyes, and see nothing. I would not wish to

know whether I am still weak enough to retain a passion for a wretch whom I ought to abhor, nor would I increase my disgust for one man by regretting the charms of another. No: let the false Euphemon live happy and content, if he can be so; but let him not be disinherited; never will I be so cruel and inhuman as to make myself his sister on purpose to ruin and destroy him. Now you know my heart, search into it no further, unless you mean to tear it in pieces.

SCENE II.

LISE, MARTHA, *a Servant.*

SERVANT.

Madam, the baroness of Croupillac waits below.

LISE.

Her visit astonishes me.

SERVANT.

She is just arrived from Angoulême, and comes to pay her respects to you.

LISE.

Upon what occasion?

MARTHA.

O upon your marriage, no doubt.

LISE.

The very subject I would wish to avoid. Am I in a condition to listen to a heap of ridiculous compli-

ments, a register of commonplace cant, and hypocrisy, that tires one to death; where common sense is murdered by the perpetual exercise of talking without saying anything? What a task I have to go through!

SCENE III.

LISE, MME. DE CROUPILLAC, MARTHA.

MARTHA.

Here her ladyship comes.

LISE.

Ay, I see her but too well.

MARTHA.

They say she wants vastly to be married, is apt to be a little quarrelsome, and almost in her dotage.

LISE.

Some chairs here. Madam, you will pardon me, if—

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

O Madam!

LISE.

Madam!

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

I, madam, must likewise beg—

LISE.

Pray be seated.

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

[*Sitting down.*

Upon my word, madam, I am quite confounded,

and wish, from the bottom of my soul, it was in my power to—

LISE.

Madam!

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

Yes, madam, I heartily wish I could steal your charms; it makes me weep to see you so handsome.

LISE.

Pray, madam, be comforted.

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

No, madam, that's impossible. I see, my dear, you may have as many husbands as you please. I had one, too, at least I thought so; only one, and that's a melancholy consideration; and trouble enough I had to get him, too, and you are going to rob me of him. There is a time, madam—O dear! how soon that time comes about!—when if a lover deserts us, we lose our all, and one is quite left alone: and let me tell you, madam, it is very cruel to take away all from one, who has little or nothing left.

LISE.

You must excuse me, madam, but I am really astonished both at your visit and your conversation: what accident, pray, has afflicted you so? Whom have you lost, or whom have I robbed you of?

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

My dear child, there are a great many wrinkled old fools, who fancy that, by the help of paint and a few false teeth, they can stop the course of time and pleasure, and fix wandering love; but, to my sorrow, I am a little wiser: I see too plainly that everything is running away, and I can't bear it.

LISE.

I am sorry for it, madam, if it be so; but I can't possibly make you young again.

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

I know it; but I have still some hopes: perhaps to restore my false one to me, might, in some measure, give me fresh youth and beauty.

LISE.

What false one do you mean?

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

My ungrateful, cruel husband, whom I have run after so long; and little worthy he is of all my care. The President, madam.

LISE.

The President!

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

Yes, madam: when Croupillac was in her bloom, she would not have talked to presidents; their persons, their manners, their everything was my aversion, but as we grow old, we are not quite so difficult.

LISE.

And so, madam—

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

And so, madam, in short, you have reduced me to a state of misery and despair.

LISE.

I, madam? how? by what means?

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

I'll tell you. I lived, you must know, at Angoulême, and, as a widow, had the free disposal of my

person: there, at that very time, was Fierenfat, a student, a president's apprentice, you understand me: he ogled me for a long time, and took it into his head to be most villainously in love with me. Villainously, I say, most horrid and abominable; for what did he make love to? my money. I got some people to write to the old gentleman, who interested themselves too far in the affair, and talked to him in my name: he returned in answer, that he would—consider it: so you see the thing was settled.

LISE.

O yes.

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

For my part, I had no objection: his elder brother was at that time, so I was informed, engaged to you.

LISE.

[*Aside.*

Cruel remembrance!

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

He was a foolish fellow, my dear; but had then the honor to be in your good graces.

LISE.

[*Sighing.*

Ah me!

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

This silly fellow, my dear, as I was telling you, being quite out at elbows, kicked out of doors by his father, and wandering about the wide world, dead, perhaps, by this time (you seem concerned), my college hero, my President, knowing extremely well, that your fortune was, upon the whole, much better than mine, has thought fit to laugh at my disap-

pointment, and go in quest of your superior—portion. But do you think, madam, to run in this manner from brother to brother, and engross a whole family to yourself? I do here most solemnly enter my protest against it: I forbid the banns: I'll venture my whole estate, my dowry, and everything; in short, the cause shall be so managed, that you, his father, my children, all of us shall be dead, before ever it is put an end to.

LISE.

I assure you, madam, with the utmost sincerity, I am very sorry that my marriage should make you miserable: I am sure, however, you have no reason to be angry with me; but I find we may make others jealous without being happy ourselves: look no longer, madam, I beseech you, with an eye of envy upon my condition; he is a husband I shall not quarrel with you for.

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

Not quarrel for him?

LISE.

No: I'll give him up to you with all my heart.

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

You have no taste then for his person? you don't love him?

LISE.

I see very few charms in matrimony, and none at all in a lawsuit; and so, madam—

SCENE IV.

MME. DE CROUPILLAC, LISE, RONDON.

RONDON.

So, so, daughter, here's fine work; protests, declarations, and lawsuits, enough to make one's hair stand on end. Ouns! shall Rondon be talked to thus? but I'll ferret them out, the impertinent rascals.

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

Must I suffer more indignities! Hear me, M. Rondon.

RONDON.

What would you have, madam?

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

Your son-in-law, sir, is a false villain, a coxcomb of a new species, a gallant, and a miser, a widow-hunter, a fellow that loves nothing but money.

RONDON.

He's in the right of it.

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

In my own house has he a thousand times vowed eternal constancy to me.

RONDON.

Promises of that kind, madam, are very seldom kept.

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

And then to leave me so basely.

RONDON.

I believe I should have done the same.

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

But I shall talk to his father in a proper manner.

RONDON.

I'd rather you would talk to him than to me.

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

'Tis a wicked thing, so it is; and the whole sex will take my part, and cry out shame upon him.

RONDON.

They can't cry louder than yourself.

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

I'll make the world know how they should treat a baroness.

RONDON.

I'll tell you how: laugh at her.

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

A husband, look ye, I must have; and I will take him, or his old father, or you.

RONDON.

Me?

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

Yes, you.

RONDON.

I defy you.

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

We'll try it: I'll go to law with you.

RONDON.

Ridiculous.

SCENE V.

RONDON, FIERENFAT, LISE.

RONDON.

[*To Lise.*

Pray, madam, what's the reason you receive such visitors in my house? you are always bringing me into some scrape or other.

[*To Fierenfat.*

And you, sir, Mr. King of Pedants, what nonsensical demon inspired you with the thought of courting a baroness, only to laugh at and abuse her? A pretty scheme indeed, with that flat face of yours, to give yourself the airs of a flighty young coxcomb; with that grave sorrowful countenance to play the gallant: it might have become the rake your brother, but for you—fie! fie!

FIERENFAT.

My dear father-in-law, don't be misled: I never was desirous of this match; I only promised her conditionally, and always reserved to myself the right of taking a richer wife, if I could get one; the disinheriting my elder brother, and coming into immediate possession of his fortune, have given me pretensions to your daughter: come, come, money makes the best matches.

RONDON.

So it does, my boy; there you're in the right.

LISE.

Now that right I take to be quite wrong.

RONDON.

Pshaw! pshaw! money does everything, that's certain; let us therefore settle the affair immediately: sixty good sacks full of French crowns will set everything right, in spite of all the Croupillacs in the universe. How this Euphemon makes me wait! I'm out of all patience; but let us sign before he comes.

LISE.

No, sir, there I enter my caveat: I will only submit on certain conditions.

RONDON.

Conditions! impertinence! you pretend to say—

LISE.

I say, sir, what I think: can we ever taste, can we enjoy that guilty happiness, which springs from another's misery? and you, sir, [*to Fierenfat*] can you in your prosperity forget that you have a brother?

FIERENFAT.

A brother? I never saw him in my life: he was gone from home when I was at college, hard at my Cujatius and Bartole. I've heard indeed of his pranks since; and, if he ever comes back again, we know what we have to do, never fear that; we shall send him off to the galleys.

LISE.

A brotherly and a Christian resolution! In the meantime you'll confiscate his estate; that, I suppose, is your intention: but I tell you, sir, I detest and abhor the project.

RONDON.

Heigh! heigh! very fine; but come, my dear, the contract is drawn, and the lawyer has taken care of all that.

FIERENFAT.

Our forefathers have determined concerning this matter; consult the written law: let me see, in Cujatius, chapter the fifth, sixth, and seventh, we read thus: "Every debauched libertine that leaves his father's house, or pillages the same, shall, *ipso facto,* be dispossessed of everything, and disinherited as a bastard."

LISE.

I know nothing about laws or precedents, nor have ever read Cujatius; but will venture to pronounce, that they are a set of vile unfeeling wretches, foes to common sense and without humanity, who say a brother should let a brother perish: nature and honor have their rights to plead, that are more powerful than Cujatius and all your laws.

RONDON.

Come, come, let's have none of your codes, and your honor, and your nonsense; but do as I'd have you: what's all this fuss about an elder brother? there should be money.

LISE.

There should be virtue, sir: let him be punished; but leave him at least something to subsist on, the poor remains of an elder brother's right: in a word, sir, I must tell you, my hand shall never be purchased at the price of his ruin: blot out, therefore, that article in the contract which I abhor, and which

would be a disgrace to us all: if lucrative views induced you to draw it up thus, it is a shame and a dishonor to us, and therefore, I desire it may be expunged.

FIERENFAT.

How very little women know of business!

RONDON.

What! you want to correct two attorneys-at-law, and make a contract void: O lud! O lud!

LISE.

Why not?

RONDON.

You'll never make a good housewife; you'll let everything go to rack and ruin.

LISE.

At present, sir, I cannot boast my knowledge of the world, or of economy; but I will maintain it, the love of money destroys more families than it supports; and if ever I have a house of my own, the foundation of it shall be laid on—justice.

RONDON.

She is light-headed; but let us humor her a little: come, give him a little portion, and the business will be over.

FIERENFAT.

Ay, ay, well—I give to my brother—ay, I give him—come along—

RONDON.

Not a single farthing.

SCENE VI.

EUPHEMON, RONDON, LISE, FIERENFAT.

RONDON.

O here comes the old gentleman. Well, I have brought my daughter to reason; we want nothing now but your hand to the contract. Come, come, let's have no more delays, cheer up, put on your jovial countenance, your wedding looks, man; for in nine months' time, I'll lay my life, two thumping boys—come, come, let us laugh and sing, and cast away care: sign, my boy, sign.

EUPHEMON.

I can't, sir.

FIERENFAT.

You can't?

RONDON.

Ay, here's another now!

FIERENFAT.

For what reason, pray?

RONDON.

What is all this madness? Are all the world turned fools? Everybody says no. Why how is this? what's the meaning of it?

EUPHEMON.

To sign the contract at a time like this, would be flying in the face of nature.

RONDON.

What! is my lady Croupillac at the bottom of all this?

EUPHEMON.

No: she's a fool, and wants to break off the match for her own sake: 'tis not from her ridiculous noise that my uneasiness arises, I assure you.

RONDON.

Whence comes it then? Did that fellow out of the coach put it into your head? Are we indebted to him for all this?

EUPHEMON.

What he told me must at least retard our happy marriage, which we were so eager upon.

LISE.

What did he tell you, sir?

FIERENFAT.

Ay, sir, what news did he bring?

EUPHEMON.

News that shocked me: at Bordeaux this man saw my son, naked, friendless, and in prison, dying with hunger; shame and sickness leading him to the grave: sickness and misfortunes had blasted the flower of his youth; and an obstinate fever, that had poisoned his blood, seemed to threaten that his last hour was not far off: when he saw him, he was then just expiring: alas! perhaps by this time he is no more.

RONDON.

Then his pension's paid.

LISE.

Dead?

RONDON.

Don't be frightened, child, what is it to you?

FIERENFAT.

Ha! the blood hath forsaken her cheeks; she looks pale as death.

RONDON.

The jade has a little too much sensibility about her, that's the truth of it: but as he's dead, I forgive thee.

FIERENFAT.

But after all, sir, do you mean—

EUPHEMON.

Don't be afraid; you shall have her; it is my desire you should: but to choose a day of mourning for a wedding-day, would be highly unbecoming. How would my griefs interrupt your mirth! how would your chaplets fade when wetted with a father's tears! no, my son, you must put off your happiness, and give me one day to indulge my sorrow: joy so ill-timed as this would be an affront to decency.

LISE.

No doubt it would: for my part, I had much rather share with you in your affliction, than think of marriage.

FIERENFAT.

Nay, but, my dear father—

RONDON.

Why, you're an old fool: what! put off a wedding, that has been the Lord knows how long upon

the anvil, for an ungrateful young dog, who has been a hundred times disinherited: a p—x on you and your whole family!

EUPHEMON.

At such a time a father must still be a father; his errors, his vices, and his crimes always made me unhappy; and it hurts me still more to think, that he is dead without ever repenting of them.

RONDON.

Well, well, we'll make that matter easy: ha! boy, let us give him some grandsons to make him amends: come, come, sign, and let's have a dance: what nonsense this is!

EUPHEMON.

But, sir—

RONDON.

But—ouns! this makes me mad: to be sorry for the luckiest accident that could happen, ridiculous! Sorrow is good for nothing at the best; but to whimper and whine, because you have got rid of a burden, intolerable absurdity! This eldest son, this scourge of yours, to my knowledge, two or three times had like to have broken your heart; sooner or later he would have brought you to the grave: therefore, prithee, man, take my advice, and make yourself easy; the loss of such a son is the greatest gain.

EUPHEMON.

True, my friend; but it is a gain that costs me more than you think: alas! I lament that he died, and I lament that ever he was born.

RONDON.

[*To Fierenfat.*

Away, follow the old gentleman, and be as expeditious as you can; the dead, you see, has got hold of the living; so take the contract, I'll not be haggled with any longer; take his hand, and make him sign. For you, madam [*to Lise*] we shall expect you to-night; everything will go well, I warrant you.

LISE.

I'm in the utmost despair.

End of the Second Act.

ACT III. SCENE I.

EUPHEMON, *the Son,* JASMIN.

JASMIN.

I have served you, sir, now two years, without knowing who or what you are: you were then my master; permit me now to call you my friend: you are now, like myself, thrown upon the wide world, and poverty has put us on a level: you are no longer the man of pleasure, the gallant and gay Euphemon, treated and caressed by the men, surrounded and courted by the women. Every stiver you had is gone to the devil; and you have nothing now to do but to forget you were ever worth a shilling; for surely the most insupportable of all evils is the remembrance of happiness which we no longer enjoy: for my part, I was always plain Jasmin, and therefore the less to be pitied: born as I was to suffer, I suffer contentedly; to be in want of everything is

only natural to me; your old hat there, for instance, and coarse ragged waistcoat, was my usual garb; and you have great reason to be sorry that you had not always been as poor as myself.

EUPHEMON.

How shame and ignominy attend upon misfortune! how melancholy a consideration is it to reflect, that a servant shall have it in his power to humble me! and what's worse, I feel that he's in the right, too; he endeavors to comfort me, after his manner; he keeps me company; and his heart, rough and unpolished as it is, is sensible, tender, and humane: born my equal—for as a fellow-creature so he was—he tried to support me under my affliction, and follows my unhappy fortune, while every friend I had, abandons me.

JASMIN.

Friends, did you say, sir? Pray, my good master, who are they? how are those people made whom they call friends?

EUPHEMON.

You have seen them, Jasmin, coming into my house whenever they pleased, troubling me forever with their importunate visits; a crowd of parasites, who lived upon my bounty, complimented my fine taste, my elegance, my delicacy; borrowed my money, then praised me before my face, and stunned me with their ridiculous flattery.

JASMIN.

Ay, poor devil! you did not hear them laughing at you as they went away, and making a joke of your foolish generosity.

EUPHEMON.

I believe it; for in the beginning of my misfortunes, when I was arrested at Bordeaux, not one of those, on whom I had lavished my all, ever came near me, or offered me his purse; and when I got out sick and friendless, I applied to one of them, in this poor ragged condition, and almost famished, for a little charitable assistance to lengthen out my wretched life, he turned away his unrelenting eye, pretended even to know nothing of me, and turned me out like a common beggar.

JASMIN.

Not one to comfort or support you?

EUPHEMON.

Not one.

JASMIN.

Such wretches! friends indeed!

EUPHEMON.

Men are made of iron.

JASMIN.

And women, too.

EUPHEMON.

Alas! from them I expected more tenderness; but met with even a thousand times greater inhumanity: one of them in particular I well remember, who openly avowed her passion for me, and seemed to take a pride in obliging me; and yet in the very lodgings, which she had furnished at my expense, and with the money I had squandered upon her, did she procure every day new gallants, and treat them with my wine, while I was perishing with hunger in the street: in short, Jasmin, if it had not been for

the old man, who picked me up by chance at Bordeaux, and who, he said, knew me when I was a child, death had by this time put an end to my misfortunes: but knowest thou, Jasmin, whereabout we are?

JASMIN.

Near Cognac, if I am not mistaken; where, they tell me, my old master Rondon lives.

EUPHEMON.

Rondon! the father of—whom did you say?

JASMIN.

Rondon, a blunt, odd fellow; I had the honor of belonging to his kitchen once; but being always of a roving disposition, chose to travel; and after that was an errand boy, a lackey, a clerk, a foot-soldier, and a deserter; at length in Bordeaux you took me into your service. Rondon perhaps may recollect me: who knows but in our adversity—

EUPHEMON.

How long is it since you left him?

JASMIN.

About fifteen years. He was a character; half pleasant, and half surly; but at the bottom a good honest fellow: he had a child, I remember, an only daughter, a perfect jewel; blue eyes, short nose, fresh complexion, vermilion lips; and then for sense and understanding, quite a miracle. When I lived there, she was, let me see, about six or seven years old, by my troth a sweet flower, and by this time fit to be gathered.

EUPHEMON.

O misery!

JASMIN.

But why should I talk to you about her? It can be of no service to you; I see you are concerned, and the tears trickle down your cheeks: my poor master!

EUPHEMON.

What unhappy fate could guide me to this place! O me!

JASMIN.

You seem in deep contemplation, and as if the sight of this place made you unhappy; you weep, too.

EUPHEMON.

I have reason.

JASMIN.

Do you know Rondon? Are you any way related to the family?

EUPHEMON.

O let me alone, let me alone.

JASMIN.

[*Embracing him.*

For pity's sake, my dear master, my friend, tell me who you are.

EUPHEMON.

[*In tears.*

I am—I am a poor unhappy wretch, a fool, a madman, a guilty abandoned criminal, whom heaven should punish, and earth detest: would I were dead!

JASMIN.

No: we must live. What, die with famine while we can help ourselves! we have our hands at least, let us make use of them, and leave off complaining: look on those fellows yonder, who have no fortune

but their industry, with their spades in their hands, turning up the garden; let us join them: come, work, man, and get your livelihood.

EUPHEMON.

Alas! those poor beings, mean as they are, and approaching nearer to animal than human nature, even they taste more pleasure and satisfaction in their labors, than my false delicacy and idle follies could ever afford me; they live, at least, free from trouble, and remorse, and enjoy health of body and peace of mind.

SCENE II.

MME. DE CROUPILLAC, YOUNG EUPHEMON, JASMIN.

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

What do I see? or do my eyes deceive me? the more I look on him, the more I think it must be he. [*She looks steadfastly at Euphemon.*] And yet surely it cannot be the same; it can never be that gallant squire of Angoulême, that played so high, and seemed to be lined with gold: it is he: [*She comes forward*] but the other was rich and happy, handsome, and well-made; this fellow looks poor and ugly. Sickness will spoil the finest face, and poverty makes a still more dreadful alteration.

JASMIN.

What female apparition is this that haunts us with her malignant aspect?

EUPHEMON.

If I am not mistaken, I know her well enough; she has seen me in all my pomp and splendor: how

dreadful it is to appear mean and destitute in the eyes of those who have seen us in affluence and prosperity! let us be gone.

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

[*Coming up to Euphemon.*

What strange accident, my dear child, hath reduced thee to this pitiful plight?

EUPHEMON.

My own folly.

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

Why, what a figure dost thou make!

EUPHEMON.

Ay, madam, the consequence of having good friends; of being robbed, and plundered.

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

Plundered? by whom? how? when? where?

JASMIN.

O from mere goodness of heart: our thieves were mighty honest creatures, persons that figured in the beau-monde, amiable triflers, gamesters, bottle-companions, agreeable story-tellers, men of wit, and women of beauty.

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

I understand you: you have squandered away all you had in eating and drinking: but you will think this nothing when you come to know the distresses I have undergone, and the losses I have suffered with regard to—matrimony.

EUPHEMON.

Your humble servant, madam.

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

[*Stopping him.*

Your servant indeed; no, no, positively you shall stay, and hear my misfortunes; you shall be sorry for me.

EUPHEMON.

Well, well, I am sorry for you; good by to you.

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

Nay, now I vow and swear you shall hear the whole story. One Monsieur Fierenfat, a lawyer by profession, got acquainted with me at Angoulême, about [*she runs after him*] the time when you beat the four bailiffs, and ran away; this Monsieur Fierenfat, you must know, lives not far from hence, with his father, Euphemon.

EUPHEMON.

[*Coming back.*

Euphemon!

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

Yes.

EUPHEMON.

For heaven's sake, madam, that Euphemon mean you, so celebrated for his virtues, the honor of his race, could he—

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

Yes, sir.

EUPHEMON.

And does he live here?

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

He does.

EUPHEMON.

And may I ask you, madam, how is he? how does he?

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

Very well, I believe, sir: what the deuce ails him?

EUPHEMON.

And pray, madam, what do they say—

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

Of whom, sir?

EUPHEMON.

Of an elder son he had formerly.

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

O an ill-begotten rogue, a rake, a rattle-pate, an arrant sot, a madman, a fellow given up to every vice; hanged, I suppose, by this time.

EUPHEMON.

Indeed, madam—but I am ashamed of interrupting you in this manner.

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

To proceed then: this Monsieur Fierenfat, as I was telling you, his younger brother, made strong love to me, and was to have been married to me.

EUPHEMON.

And is he so happy? have you got him?

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

No: would you think it, sir, this fool, puffed up with the thoughts of stepping in to all his mad brother's fortune, growing rich, and wanting to be more so, breaks off this match, which would have

been so honorable to him, and now wants to lay hold of the daughter of one Rondon, a vulgar cit, the cock of the village here.

EUPHEMON.

Going to marry her, say you?

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

And here am I most dreadfully jealous of her.

EUPHEMON.

That beautiful creature—Jasmin here was just now giving me a picture of her—would she throw herself away—

JASMIN.

[*Aside to Euphemon.*

What are you about, sir? this husband is as good as another for her, I think: but my master's a strange man, everything afflicts him.

EUPHEMON.

[*Aside.*

This is beyond all bearing.

[*Aloud to Mme. de Croupillac.*

My heart, madam, is deeply sensible of the injury you have received; this Lise should never be his, if I could prevent it.

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

You take it rightly, sir; you lament my unhappy fate; the poor are always compassionate; you had not half the good nature when you rolled in money; but mind what I have to say, in this life we may always help one another.

JASMIN.

Help us then, dear madam, I beseech you.

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

You must act for me in this affair.

EUPHEMON.

I, madam! how is it possible for me to serve you?

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

O in a thousand ways! you shall take my cause in hand: another dress and a little finery will make you still look tolerably handsome: you have a polite, insinuating address, and know how to wheedle a young girl: introduce yourself into the family, play the flatterer with Fierenfat, compliment him on his riches, his wit, his dress, everything about him, get into his good graces, and while I enter my protest against the unlawful procedure, you will do all the rest; by this means I shall at least gain time.

EUPHEMON.

[*Seeing his father at a distance.*

What do I see? O heaven!

[*He runs off.*

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

Hai! hai! the fellow's mad sure.

JASMIN.

He's afraid of you, ma'am, that's all.

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

A blockhead! here, you, stop, hark ye, hark ye. I must follow him.

SCENE III.

OLD EUPHEMON, JASMIN.

EUPHEMON.

Even the imperfect glance I had of that poor wretch, whoever he is, has, I know not why, filled my heart with anguish and disquietude: he had a noble air, and a turn of features that, somehow or other, affected me: alas! I never see a poor creature of that age, but the sad image of my unhappy son recurs to me; I have still a father's tenderness for him: but he is dead, or only lives with infamy to disgrace me: both my children make me miserable: one by his vice and debauchery is my eternal punishment, while the other abuses my indulgence, and knows but too well that he is the only support of my old age: life is a burden to me, and I must soon sink beneath it. Who art thou, friend?

[*Perceiving Jasmin, who bows to him.*

JASMIN.

Honored sir, noble and generous Euphemon, don't you remember poor Jasmin, sir, who lived with Rondon?

EUPHEMON.

Ah, Jasmin, is it you? time alters our faces, as you see by mine: when you lived here I had a good fresh complexion, was hearty and well; but age comes on, my time is almost over: and so, Jasmin, you are come back to your own country at last?

JASMIN.

Yes, sir: I grew weary of such a fatiguing life, of rambling about like a wandering Jew, so I even came home. Happiness is a fugitive being, I am sure it has been so to me. The Devil took me out, I believe, led me a long walk, and now has brought me back again.

EUPHEMON.

Well, I may assist you perhaps, if you behave yourself well: but who was that other poor wretch you were talking with, he that ran off just now?

JASMIN.

A comrade of mine, a poor wretch, half-starved like myself, without a farthing; he's in search of employment as well as I.

EUPHEMON.

Perhaps I may find some for you both: is he sober and sensible?

JASMIN.

He ought to be so: he has very good parts, I know; can write, and read, understands arithmetic, draws a little, knows music; he was very well brought up.

EUPHEMON.

If so, I have a place ready for him: as for you, Jasmin, my son shall hire you; he is going to be married, to-night perhaps: as his fortune is increased, he'll want more servants; and one of his is going away, too, and you may step into his place: to-night I'll present you both; you shall see him at my neighbor Rondon's; I'll talk to him there about it; so fare thee well, Jasmin; in the meantime, here's something for you to drink.

SCENE IV.

JASMIN.

[*Alone.*

The good man! blessings on him! Could I ever have thought in this vile age to meet with so good a heart? his air, his demeanor, his benevolent soul, form together a speaking picture of the integrity of former ages.

SCENE V.

YOUNG EUPHEMON, JASMIN.

JASMIN.

[*Embracing him.*

Well, I have got a place for you; we are both to serve Euphemon.

EUPHEMON.

Ay! Euphemon!

JASMIN.

Yes, if you like it: you seem surprised: why are your eyes turned up in this manner, as if you were going to be exorcised? what is the meaning of those deep sighs, that will not let you speak?

EUPHEMON.

O Jasmin, I can no longer contain myself; tenderness, pain, remorse, all press upon me.

JASMIN.

What! has my lady there said anything to you? what has she told you?

EUPHEMON.

She told me nothing.

JASMIN.

What's the matter then?

EUPHEMON.

My heart will no longer suffer me to conceal it from you: in short, that Euphemon—

JASMIN.

Well, what of him?

EUPHEMON.

O he is—my father.

JASMIN.

Your father? sir?

EUPHEMON.

Yes, Jasmin; I am that elder son, that criminal, that unfortunate, who has ruined his unhappy family. O how my heart fluttered at the sight of him, and offered up its humble prayers! O with what joy could I have fallen down at his feet!

JASMIN.

Thou, Euphemon's son! forgive me, sir, forgive my rude familiarity.

EUPHEMON.

O Jasmin, thinkest thou a heart, oppressed as mine is, can be offended?

JASMIN.

You are the son of a man whom all the world admires; a man of a million: to say the truth, the rep-

utation of his son shows to no great advantage when placed near his father's.

EUPHEMON.

'Tis that which gives me most uneasiness. But tell me, what did my father say?

JASMIN.

I told him, sir, we were two unfortunate youths, very poor, but well educated, and would be glad to serve him: he lamented our fate, and consented to take us. This evening he will introduce you to his son, the President, who, it seems, is to marry Lise; that fortunate brother, to whom my old master Rondon is to be father-in-law.

EUPHEMON.

And now, Jasmin, I will unfold my heart to you: hear the history of my misfortunes, and think how wretched I must be, to draw upon myself, by a variety of follies, the just indignation of a beloved parent; to be hated, despised, disinherited; to feel all the horrors of beggary and want; to see my fortune given to my younger brother, and forced after all, in my state of ignominy, to serve the very man who has robbed me of everything: this is my fate, a fate I have but too well deserved. But would you believe it, Jasmin, in the midst of all my calamities, dead as I am to pleasures, and dead to every hope, hated by the world, despised by all, and expecting nothing, I yet dare to be—jealous.

JASMIN.

Jealous! of whom?

EUPHEMON.

Of my brother; of Lise.

JASMIN.

So, you are in love with your sister! well, that's a stroke worthy of you, the only sin you had never yet committed.

EUPHEMON.

You are to know, Jasmin—for I believe you had then left Rondon—that we were no sooner out of our infancy, than our parents promised us to each other: our hearts readily obeyed, and were united: the conformity of our ages, our taste, our manners, our situation, everything conspired to strengthen the tie; like two young trees, we grew up together, and were to have joined our branches: time, that heightened her charms, improved her tenderness, and love made her every day more lovely: the world at that blest time might have envied me; but I was young, foolish, and blind; linked in with a set of wretches, who seduced my innocence; intoxicated with folly and extravagance, I made a merit of despising her passion for me, nay, even affronted her: O I reflect on it with horror. The crowd of vices, that rushed in upon me, carried me away from my father and my friends; what was my fate after this I need not inform you. Everything is gone; and heaven, which tore me from her, has left me nothing but a heart to punish me.

JASMIN.

If so it be, and you really love her still, notwithstanding all your distress, Mme. de Croupillac's advice was good, to insinuate yourself, if possible, into Rondon's family. Your purse is empty, and love perhaps may find means to fill it again.

EUPHEMON.

Could I ever dare to look upon her, to come in her sight, after what I have done, and in this miserable condition? No. I must avoid a father and a mistress; I have abused the goodness of them both and know not—but it is too late to repent—which should hate me most.

SCENE VI.

YOUNG EUPHEMON, FIERENFAT, JASMIN.

JASMIN.

O here comes our wise President.

EUPHEMON.

Is it he? I never saw his face before; my brother, and my rival!

FIERENFAT.

Come, come, this does not go amiss. I have pressed, and rated the old gentleman in such a manner, that I believe we shall be able to finish the affair in spite of him But where are these fellows who are to serve me?

JASMIN.

We are come, please your honor, to offer ourselves—

FIERENFAT.

Which of you two can read?

JASMIN.

He, sir.

FIERENFAT.

And write, too, I suppose?

JASMIN.

O yes, sir, and cipher, and cast accounts.

FIERENFAT.

Ay, but he must know how to talk, too.

JASMIN.

He's a little modest, sir, and but just recovered from a fit of sickness.

FIERENFAT.

He looks bold enough, I think, and as if he knew his own merit. Well, sir, what wages do you expect?

EUPHEMON.

None, sir.

JASMIN.

O sir, we have a most heroic soul.

FIERENFAT.

Well, upon those conditions I take you into my service: come, I'll present you to my wife.

EUPHEMON.

Your wife, sir?

FIERENFAT.

Yes, I'm going to be married.

EUPHEMON.

When, pray?

FIERENFAT.

To-night.

EUPHEMON.

O heaven! pray, sir, forgive me, but are you deeply in love with her, sir?

FIERENFAT.

Certainly.

EUPHEMON.

Indeed?

FIERENFAT.

Yes.

EUPHEMON.

And are you beloved?

FIERENFAT.

I hope so. A droll fellow, this! You seem extremely curious, sir.

EUPHEMON.

[*Aside.*

How I wish to contradict him, and punish him for his excess of happiness!

FIERENFAT.

[*To Jasmin.*

What does he say?

JASMIN.

He says, he wishes with all his heart he was like you, formed to please.

FIERENFAT.

The ambition of the coxcomb! but come, follow me: be diligent, sober, prudent, careful, clever, and respectful. What, ho! la Fleur, la Brie, you rascals, where are you all? follow me.

[*He goes out.*

EUPHEMON.

Now could I like to salute him with two good boxes on the ear, to make that lawyer's face of his twinge again.

JASMIN.

I find, my friend, you are not mended much.

EUPHEMON.

I'm sure it is time to be so; and I assure you, I intend to be wiser for the future: from all my errors I shall at least reap this advantage, to know how to suffer.

End of the Third Act.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

MME. DE CROUPILLAC, YOUNG EUPHEMON, JASMIN.

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

I have taken care, my friend, by way of precaution, to bring two sergeants from Angoulême; have you performed your part as well, and done as I desired you? Shall you be able, think you, to put on an air of consequence, and sow a little dissension in the family? Have you flattered the old gentleman? Have you looked forward a little?

EUPHEMON.

No.

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

How?

EUPHEMON.

Believe me, madam, I long to throw myself at her feet.

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

Pray then make haste and do it; begin your attack as soon as possible, and restore my ungrateful seducer. I'll go to law for you, and you shall make love for me: cheer up, man, put on your best looks; assume that air of importance and self-sufficiency, which is sure to conquer every heart, which baffles wit, and triumphs over wisdom: to be happy in love, you must be bold; resume your wonted courage.

EUPHEMON.

O I have lost it all.

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

How so, man? what's the matter?

EUPHEMON.

I had courage enough when I was not in love; but at present—

JASMIN.

There may be other reasons why he should be rather bashful; this Fierenfat, you must know, is our lord and master, and has taken us both into his service.

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

So much the better; a lucky circumstance: to be a domestic in your mistress' family, let me tell you, is a singular happiness: make your advantage of it.

JASMIN.

Yonder's something pretty, and coming this way, too, to take the air, I suppose: she seems to come out of Rondon's house.

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

'Tis she: come, my dear lover, make haste, now's your time: pluck up your courage, and speak to her: what! sighing and trembling, and pretend to love her, too? O, fie, fie!

EUPHEMON.

O if you knew the situation of my heart, you would not wonder at my trembling and confusion!

JASMIN.

[*Seeing Lise at a distance.*

Sweet creature! how beautiful she looks!

EUPHEMON.

'Tis she: O heaven! I die with love, with remorse, with jealousy, and despair.

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

Adieu: I will endeavor to return the obligation.

EUPHEMON.

All I ask of you is, if possible, to put off this cruel marriage.

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

That's what I shall immediately set about.

EUPHEMON.

Alas! I tremble.

JASMIN.

We must try to get her by herself; let us retire a little.

EUPHEMON.

I'll follow you: I scarce know what I have done, or what I am going to do. I shall never be able to face her.

SCENE II.

LISE, MARTHA, JASMIN, *at the farther end of the stage, and* YOUNG EUPHEMON *behind him.*

LISE.

In vain do I go in and out, backwards, and forwards, endeavoring, if possible, to hide myself from myself; in vain do I seek for solitude, and examine my own heart: alas! the more I look into it, the more am I convinced that happiness was never made for me. If I do at any time enjoy a momentary comfort, it is from that old ridiculous creature Croupillac, and the thought of her preventing this detested match; but then all my apprehensions return, when Fierenfat and my father urge it upon me with repeated importunities: they have gained over the good Euphemon.

MARTHA.

In troth, the old man is too good-natured, and Fierenfat governs him most tyrannically.

LISE.

I pardon him, he's fond of an only child; his elder, poor man, gave him a great deal of uneasiness, and now he relies entirely upon the other.

MARTHA.

But after all, madam, notwithstanding everything that has been reported, it is not clear that the other is yet dead.

LISE.

Alas! if dead, I must lament; if living, I must hate him: cruel alternatives!

MARTHA.

The news of his danger, however, seemed to have a powerful effect upon you.

LISE.

One might be sorry for his misfortunes without loving him, you know.

MARTHA.

But one may as well be dead as not be loved: and so you are really to be married to his brother?

LISE.

My dear child, I am distracted at the thought of it: you have long known my indifference for Fierenfat; it is now changed to horror and detestation: marriage with him is a potion most dreadfully bitter, which, in my present desperate case, I must swallow much against my will, I assure you; though my hand, at the same time, rejects it with horror and indignation.

JASMIN.

[*Pulling Martha by the sleeve.*

Hark'ee, fair lady, will you give me leave to whisper a word or two in your ear?

MARTHA.

[*To Jasmin.*

Most willingly, sir.

LISE.

[*Aside.*

O cruel fate! why didst thou prolong a life, which an ungrateful, guilty lover has made so truly miserable?

MARTHA.

[*To Lise.*

One of the President's servants, madam, but just now hired to him: he says, he should be glad to speak to you.

LISE.

Let him wait.

MARTHA.

[*To Jasmin.*

Friend, my lady desires you would wait a little.

LISE.

Always teasing me thus! even when he is absent I can have no peace for him. O dear! how weary am I of this marriage already!

JASMIN.

[*To Martha.*

My dear girl, procure us this favor, if you can.

MARTHA.

[*Coming back.*

Madam, he says he must speak with you.

LISE.

So! I see I must go.

MARTHA.

There is a person, it seems, who is very desirous of seeing you; he must speak to you, he says, or die.

LISE.

I find I must go in and hide myself.

SCENE III.

LISE, MARTHA, YOUNG EUPHEMON *leaning on* JASMIN.

EUPHEMON.

I can neither walk nor speak; my sight, too, fails me.

JASMIN.

Give me your hand; we'll cross her as she comes.

EUPHEMON.

O I feel a deadly coldness at my heart [*to Lise*] will you permit—

LISE.

[*Without looking at him.*

What would you, sir?

EUPHEMON.

[*Throwing himself on his knees.*

What would I? that death which I deserve.

LISE.

What do I see? O heaven!

MARTHA.

Amazing! Euphemon! good God, how changed!

EUPHEMON.

Changed indeed: yes, Lise, you are avenged of me. Well may you wonder, for I am changed in everything: no longer do you behold in me that madman, that false wretch, so feared and detested

here; he who betrayed the cause of nature and of love: young and thoughtless as I was, I fell a prey to every passion, and adopted every vice from my loose companions: but O the worst of all my crimes, which never can be blotted out, never atoned for, was my offending you: but here I swear, by thee, and by that virtue, which, though I have forsaken, I yet adore, I have found my error. Vice, though I admitted it, was a stranger to this heart, which is now no longer stained with those guilty blemishes that obscured its native lustre; that pure, that sacred passion, which is still reserved for you, hath refined it; that tender passion, and that alone, brought me hither, not to break off your new engagements, or oppose your happiness, that would ill become a poor abandoned wretch like me: but since the misfortunes, which I so well deserved, have brought me, even in the prime of life, to the brink of the grave, I could not help seeking you, to be a witness of my last moments; and happy, thrice happy shall I be, if he, who was once destined to be your husband, at length shall die, and not be hated by you.

LISE.

I am scarce myself: can it be Euphemon? can it be you? O heaven! in what a condition too, and what a time is this: wretch as thou art, what cruel injuries hast thou done to both of us!

EUPHEMON.

I know it: at sight of thee, every folly I have been guilty of appears doubly inexcusable: they were dreadful, and you know they were, that is some punishment, but not so much as I deserve.

LISE.

And is it true, unhappy man, that thou hast at last repented of thy follies; that your rebellious heart is at length subdued, and misfortune hath pointed out to you the road of virtue?

EUPHEMON.

Alas! what will it avail, that my eyes are opened, when it is too late! In vain is that heart subdued, in vain is my return to virtue, since I have lost in you its best, its only valuable reward.

LISE.

Yet, answer me, Euphemon; may I believe you have indeed gained this glorious victory? consult your own breast, and do not again deceive me: can you yet be prudent and virtuous?

EUPHEMON.

I am so; for still my heart adores you.

LISE.

And dost thou still love, Euphemon?

EUPHEMON.

Do I love? by that I live, that alone has supported me. I have borne everything, even infamy itself; and a thousand times I would have put an end to my wretched life, but that still I loved it, because it belonged to you: yes, to you I owe my present sentiments, my being, and that new life which now dawns upon me: to you I owe the return of my reason: with love like mine, would to heaven I may be able to preserve it! O do not hide from me that charming face: look at me: see how changed I am: see the cruel effect of care and sorrow: the roses

of youth are withered by remorse and misery: there was a time when Euphemon would not thus have affrighted you: do but look on me, 'tis all I ask.

LISE.

If I see the thinking, the reformed, the constant Euphemon, it is enough: in my eyes he is but too amiable.

EUPHEMON.

What says my Lise? gracious heaven! she weeps.

LISE.

[*To Martha.*

O support me, my senses fail. Can I ever be the wife of Euphemon's brother?

[*Turning to Euphemon.*

But tell me, have you yet seen your father?

EUPHEMON.

O I blush to appear before that good old man, whom I have so dishonored: hated as I am, and banished from his presence, I love and reverence, but dare not look upon him.

LISE.

What then is your design?

EUPHEMON.

If heaven should graciously prolong my days, if you must be my brother's happy lot, I propose to change my name and profession, serve as a soldier, and seek for death in the field of honor; perhaps success in arms may acquire me some glory, and even you may hereafter shed a tear over the unhappy Euphemon. My honor at least will never

suffer by the employment; Rose and Fabert set out as I shall do.

LISE.

'Tis a noble resolution; and the heart that was capable of making it must be above guilt and meanness: sentiments like these affect me much more even than the tears you shed at my feet. No, Euphemon, if I am left at liberty to dispose of myself, and can possibly avoid a hateful match proposed for me, if it is in my power to determine your fate, you shall not go so far to change your condition.

EUPHEMON.

O heaven! and does thy generous heart melt at my misfortunes?

LISE.

They affect me most deeply: but your repentance hath secured me.

EUPHEMON.

And will those dear eyes, that looked on me so long with indignation, will they soften into love and tenderness? O thou hast revived a flame in the breast of Euphemon, which his follies had almost extinguished. Fond as my brother is of riches, though my father has given him all that inheritance which nature had designed for me, he still must envy my happiness. I am dear to you; he alone, and not Euphemon, is disinherited. O I shall die with joy.

MARTHA.

Deuce on him, here he comes.

LISE.

Be upon your guard, Euphemon; keep in those struggling sighs, and dissemble.

EUPHEMON.

Why should I, if you love me?

LISE.

Consider my relations, consider your own father. Your brother saw us together, saw you at my feet; and all that we can now do is, not to let him know who you are.

MARTHA.

I can't help laughing, to think what a passion his gravity will be in.

SCENE IV.

LISE, MARTHA, JASMIN, FIERENFAT, *at the farther end of the stage,* YOUNG EUPHEMON *turning his back to him.*

FIERENFAT.

Either some devil has impaired these eyes of mine; or, if I see clear, I most certainly beheld—O yes—it is so—it's all over with me.

[*Coming forward towards Euphemon.*

O it is you, sir, is it? traitor, rascal, forger.

EUPHEMON.

[*Enraged.*

I, I could—

JASMIN.

[*Placing himself between them.*

Sir, sir, this—this is an affair of importance that was going forward, and you interrupt it, sir; an affair of love, sir, tenderness, respect, gratitude, and

virtue—for my part I'm distracted when I think of it.

FIERENFAT.

An affair of virtue! O yes, and kissing her hand, too! call you that virtue? rascal, slave.

EUPHEMON.

O Jasmin, if I dared—

FIERENFAT.

No: this is a gallant indeed with a witness: had he been a gentleman, but a servant, a beggar—if I was to sue him in a court of justice, it would be only so much money flung away.

LISE.

[*To Euphemon.*

Be calm; if you have any regard for me, I beg you will.

FIERENFAT.

The traitor! I'll have you hanged, you dog.

[*To Martha.*

You laugh, mistress.

MARTHA.

I do, to be sure, sir.

FIERENFAT.

And why do you? what do you laugh at?

MARTHA.

Lord, sir, 'tis such a comical affair.

FIERENFAT.

You don't know, madam, the danger you are in: you little think, my good friend, what the law in-

flicts on such delinquents as you, and how often you may be—

MARTHA.

Pardon me, sir, I know it mighty well.

FIERENFAT.

[*To Lise.*

You, madam, seem to be deaf to all this, faithless woman! with that air of innocence, too, to play me such a trick: your inconstancy is a little premature on our very wedding-day, and just before we are married: 'tis a wonderful mark of your chastity.

LISE.

Don't be in a passion, sir, nor lightly condemn innocence on bare appearances only.

FIERENFAT.

Innocence indeed!

LISE.

Yes, sir: when you know my sentiments, you will esteem me for them.

FIERENFAT.

You go an excellent way to gain esteem.

EUPHEMON.

This is too much.

LISE.

[*To Euphemon.*

What madness! for heaven's sake be calm, restrain—

EUPHEMON.

No: I will never suffer him to cast reproach on you.

FIERENFAT.

Do you know, madam, that you lose your jointure, your estate, your portion, everything, as soon as—

EUPHEMON.

[*In a passion and putting his hand on his sword.*
Do you know, sir, how to hold your tongue?

LISE.

O forbear.

EUPHEMON.

Come, come, Mr. President, lay aside your assuming airs, be a little less fierce, and haughty; a little less of the judge, if you please: this lady has not yet the honor to be your wife, nor is she even your mistress, sir: what right have you then to complain? your claim is void: you should have known how to please, before you had a right to be angry: such charms were never made for you, and therefore jealousy sits but ill upon you. You see she's kind, and forgives my warmth; it will become you, sir, to follow her example.

FIERENFAT.

[*In a posture of defence.*
I'll bear no more: where are my servants? help here.

EUPHEMON.

How's this!

FIERENFAT.

Fetch me a constable here.

LISE.

[*To Euphemon.*
Retire, I beseech you.

FIERENFAT.

I'll make you know, sir, the respect that's due to my rank and profession.

EUPHEMON.

Observe, sir, what you owe to this lady: as to myself, however things may now appear, the respect perhaps is due to me.

FIERENFAT.

You, sir, you?

EUPHEMON.

Yes, sir, me, me.

FIERENFAT.

This is a pure impudent fellow: some lover, I suppose, in the disguise of a servant. Who are you, sir? answer me.

EUPHEMON.

I know not who I am, nor what will be my fate: my rank, condition, fortune, happiness, my very being, all depend on her heart, her kind looks, and her propitious bounty.

FIERENFAT.

They may soon depend upon a court of justice, that I assure you. I'll go this instant, prepare my records, and hasten to sign the instrument. Begone, ungrateful woman, and dread my resentment; I'll bring your relatives, and your father; then your innocence will appear in its proper light, and they will esteem you accordingly.

SCENE V.

LISE, YOUNG EUPHEMON, MARTHA.

LISE.

For heaven's sake, conceal yourself; let us go in immediately; I tremble at the consequence of this. If your father should find out it was you, nothing will appease him: he will conclude that some new extravagance brought you back here on purpose to insult him, and to sow division between our families; and then you will be confined perhaps, even without being so much as heard in your own defence.

MARTHA.

Let me conceal him, and I'll warrant they shan't easily find him out.

LISE.

Come, come, you must away; I must endeavor to reconcile your father: the return of nature shall, if possible, be the work of love: you must be concealed awhile—take you care [*to Martha*] he does not appear: begone immediately.

SCENE VI.

RONDON, LISE.

RONDON.

Well, my Lise, how is it? I was in search of you and your husband.

LISE.

[*Aside.*

Thank God! he is not so yet.

RONDON.

Where are you going?

LISE.

Decency, sir, at present obliges me to avoid him.

[*She goes out.*

RONDON.

This President is a dangerous man, I find: now should I like to be incog. in some place close to them, only to see how two lovers look when they are just going to be married.

SCENE VII.

FIERENFAT, RONDON, *Constables, etc.*

FIERENFAT.

Where are they, where are they? ha! gone; the subtle villains have escaped me: where have the rascals hid themselves?

RONDON.

Your reverence seems out of breath? what are you in such a hurry about? whom are you hunting after? what have they done to you?

FIERENFAT.

Made a cuckold of me, that's all.

RONDON.

Ha! ha! a cuckold! ha! how! what is all this?

FIERENFAT.

Yes, yes, my wife, heaven preserve me from ever giving her that name! Yes, sir, a cuckold I am, in spite of all the laws in the kingdom.

RONDON.

My son-in-law!

FIERENFAT.

Yes, my father-in-law, 'tis but too true.

RONDON.

Well, but the affair—

FIERENFAT.

Is as clear as possible.

RONDON.

You try my patience too far.

FIERENFAT.

I'm sure they have mine.

RONDON.

If I could believe—

FIERENFAT.

You may believe it all, sir, I assure you.

RONDON.

But the more I hear, the less I understand.

FIERENFAT.

And yet it's very easy to comprehend.

RONDON.

If I were once convinced of it, the world should be a witness of my resentment, I would strangle her with my own hands.

FIERENFAT.

Strangle her then by all means, for the thing is fairly proved.

RONDON.

Something no doubt is wrong, by my finding her here in that condition; she hung down her head, and could scarce speak to me; seemed frightened, and embarrassed too. Come, my son, let us in, and surprise her. This is a case of honor, and where that is concerned, Rondon listens no longer to reason. Away.

End of the Fourth Act.

ACT V. SCENE I.

LISE, MARTHA.

LISE.

What a desperate situation is mine! scarce can I believe myself safe, even with you. Think what it must be for a soul so pure, so delicate, as mine, to suffer even for a moment such injurious suspicions: Euphemon, thou dear but fatal lover, thou wert born but to afflict me; thy absence was worse than death to me, and now thy return exposes me to infamy: [*turning to Martha*] for heaven's sake, take care of him, for they are making the strictest inquiry.

MARTHA.

O never fear; I shall put them to their trumps, I warrant you: I defy all their search-warrants: I have some certain little cunning holes in my cabinet which these ferrets can never get at; there, madam,

your lover lies snug, safely concealed from the inquisitive eyes of long-robed pedants. I have led the hounds a pretty good chase, and now the whole pack is at fault.

SCENE II.

LISE, MARTHA, JASMIN.

LISE.

Well, Jasmin, how stand our affairs?

JASMIN.

O I have passed my examination most gloriously, gone through it like an old offender, grown gray in the profession, and answered every question without fear or trembling. One of them drawled out his words with all the solemnity of a pedagogue; another put on a haughty air, and would have browbeaten me; a third, in a pretty, silvery tone, cried out: "Child, tell us the truth:" while I, with most laconic brevity, and unalterable firmness, fairly routed the whole group of pedants.

LISE.

They know nothing then.

JASMIN.

Nothing: to-morrow perhaps they may know all: time, you know, brings everything to light.

LISE.

I hope at least Fierenfat will not have time to prejudice his father against me: I have a thousand fears about it: I tremble for him, and for my own

honor: in love alone I have placed my hopes, that will assist me—

MARTHA.

For my part, I'm in a sad quandary about it, and wish everything may not go wrong: consider, madam, we have against us two old fathers, and a president, besides scolds, and prudes innumerable: if you knew what haughty airs they give themselves, what a supercilious sneer, and severe tone, their proud virtue puts on upon this occasion, with what insolent acrimony they have persecuted your innocence, believe me, madam, their clamors, with their affected zeal, and most religious fury, would raise your laughter, perhaps even make you tremble.

JASMIN.

I have travelled, madam, and seen noise and bustle enough, but never before was I witness to such a hubbub; the whole house is turned topsy-turvy; they are all knaves, fools, or madmen; whispering lies against you, and adding one untruth to another; telling the story a hundred different ways; the poor fiddles are sent back without receiving a farthing, or a drop of drink: six tables prepared for the wedding feast, full of the finest delicacies, overset in the confusion: the people run backwards and forwards; the footmen drink and laugh; Rondon swears, and Fierenfat is employed in writing the case out.

LISE.

And what does the worthy father of Euphemon do amidst all this bustle?

MARTHA.

O madam, in his dejected aspect we may read the sorrow of afflicted virtue: he lifts up his eyes to

heaven, and cannot bring himself to believe that you have stained the honor of your spotless youth with so black a crime: he defends you to your friends by the strongest arguments: and when at length he is staggered by the proofs they bring against you, he sighs, and says, if you are guilty, he will never again depend on any mortal breathing.

LISE.

The good old man, how his tenderness affects me!

MARTHA.

Here comes another, of a different kind, Master Rondon; let us avoid him, madam.

LISE.

By no means; my heart is innocent, and should be afraid of nothing.

JASMIN.

But I am, I assure you.

SCENE III.

LISE, MARTHA, RONDON.

RONDON.

O thou subtle gypsy, thou forward, thou unnatural girl! O Lise, Lise. But come, madam, I must know the bottom of this vile proceeding: how long have you been acquainted with this robber, this pirate? Tell me his name, his rank, his profession; how got he into your heart? Whence comes he, and where is he? Answer me, madam, answer me. You contemn me, madam, and laugh at my resentment; are not you ashamed?

LISE.

No, sir.

RONDON.

Always no, no, to me: am I never to hear anything but no? It increases my suspicion: when I am injured, I expect at least to be treated with respect. I will be feared, madam, and obeyed, too.

LISE.

And so you shall, sir. I will discover everything to you.

RONDON.

Well, that's saying something at least: when I begin to threaten, people will mind me a little, and—

LISE.

I have only one favor to beg of you—that, before I say anything to you, Euphemon will be so obliging as to let me speak a few words to him.

RONDON.

Euphemon! why, what has he to do with it? I think I am the proper person to be spoken to.

LISE.

My dear father, I have a secret to intrust to him: let me beg you, for the sake of your own honor, to send him to me: permit me—but I can tell you no more.

RONDON.

I must even yield to her request; she wants to explain herself to my good old friend, and I think I may safely trust her alone with him; and then to a nunnery with the little hussy immediately.

SCENE IV.

LISE, MARTHA.

LISE.

O that I may be able to melt the good Euphemon! How my heart flutters and leaps within me! my life or death depends on this important moment. He comes. Hark'ee, Martha.

[*Whispers to her.*

MARTHA.

I'll take care, madam.

SCENE V.

OLD EUPHEMON, LISE.

LISE.

A chair here—pray, sir, be seated. Oh! [*Sighs*] permit me, sir, on my knees—

EUPHEMON.

[*Raising her up.*

You mean to affront me, madam.

LISE.

Far from it, sir; my heart esteems and reveres you; I have ever looked on you as a father.

EUPHEMON.

Are you my daughter?

LISE.

Yes, sir. I flatter myself I have not been unworthy of that name.

EUPHEMON.

After the unhappy affair, madam, that has broken off our connection, I must own—

LISE.

Be you my judge, sir, and look into my heart; that judge, I doubt not, will one day be my protector: but hear me, sir, I will speak my own sentiments, perhaps they may be yours also.

[*She takes a chair and sits by him.*

And now, sir, tell me; if your heart had for a long time been bound by the purest and most tender regard to an object, whose early years gave the fairest promise of all that is amiable, who every day advanced in beauty, merit, and accomplishments; if, after all, his easy and deluded youth gave way to inclination, and sacrificed duty, friendship, everything, to unbridled licentiousness—

EUPHEMON.

Well, madam.

LISE.

If fatal experience should teach him what false happiness he had so long pursued, should teach him that the vain objects of his search sprang but from error, and were followed by remorse; if at length, ashamed of his follies, his reason, instructed by misfortune, should again light up his virtues, and give him a new heart; if, restored to his natural form, he should become faithful, just, and honest, would you, sir, could you then shut up that heart which once was open to receive him?

EUPHEMON.

What am I to conclude from this picture, or what has it to do with our affair, and the injury I have received from your conduct? The wretch who was seen at your feet is a young man, utterly unknown to everybody here: the widow says indeed she remembers him six months at Angoulême: another tells me he is a hardy profligate, with a head full of dark intrigues, and every kind of debauchery; a character which doubles my astonishment: I shudder with horror at it.

LISE.

O sir, when I have told you all, you will be much more astonished; for heaven's sake, hear me then: I know you have a noble and a generous heart, that never was formed for cruelty; let me then ask you, was not your son Euphemon once most dear to you?

EUPHEMON.

He was, I own to you, he was, and therefore it is that his ingratitude calls for a severer vengeance: I have wept his misfortunes and his death; but nature, in the midst of all my anguish, left my reason but the more sensible of my injuries, and more resolved to punish them.

LISE.

And could you punish him forever? could you still be so unhappy, so miserable, as to hate him? could you throw from you a repenting child, an altered son, whose change would bring back to you the image of yourself? could you repulse this son were he now in tears at your feet?

EUPHEMON.

Alas! you have forgotten, you should not thus open a wound that bleeds too fresh, and inflict new torments on me: my son is dead, or far hence remains still hardened in his follies. O if he had returned to virtue, would he not come, and ask forgiveness of me?

LISE.

Yes, and he will come to ask it; you shall hear him; and hear him with compassion, too, indeed you shall.

EUPHEMON.

What say you?

LISE.

Yes, sir: if death has not already put an end to his shame and grief, you may perhaps see him dying at your feet with excess of sorrow and repentance.

EUPHEMON.

You see too well how deeply I am affected: my son alive!

LISE.

If he yet lives, he lives to love and honor you.

EUPHEMON.

To love and honor me! impossible! how can I ever know it? from whom must I learn that?

LISE.

From his own heart.

EUPHEMON.

But, do you think—

LISE.

With regard to everything I have said concerning him, you may depend on my veracity.

EUPHEMON.

Come, you have kept me in suspense too long; have pity on my declining years. Alas! I am full of hopes and fears: I did indeed love my son, these tears speak for me: I loved him tenderly. O if he yet lives! if he is returned to virtue! explain, I beseech you, speak to me, tell me all.

LISE.

I will: it is time now, and you shall be satisfied.

[*She comes forward a little, and speaks to young Euphemon behind the scene.*

Come forth.

SCENE VI.

OLD EUPHEMON, YOUNG EUPHEMON, LISE.

OLD EUPHEMON.

Good heaven! what do I see?

YOUNG EUPHEMON.

[*Kneeling.*

My father! O sir, know me, acknowledge me, decide my fate, for life or death depends upon a word.

OLD EUPHEMON.

What could bring you hither at this time?

YOUNG EUPHEMON.

Repentance, love, and nature.

LISE.

[*Kneeling with young Euphemon.*

At your feet behold your children. Yes, sir, we have the same sentiments, the same heart.

YOUNG EUPHEMON.

[*Pointing to Lise.*

Alas! her tender kindness has pardoned all my offences: O gracious sir, follow the example which love has set, and forgive your unhappy son; driven as I was to despair, all I hoped for was to die beloved by her and you; and if I live, I will live to deserve it. You turn away from me; what is it, sir, that transports you thus? I see your heart is moved: is it with hatred? is your wretched son condemned—

OLD EUPHEMON.

[*Raising up his son, and embracing him.*

'Tis love; 'tis tenderness: I forgive thee: if thou art restored to virtue, I am still thy father.

LISE.

And I thy wife. O sir, long since our hearts were united; permit us at your feet to renew our vows: it is not your riches he asks of you, he brings you now a heart too pure for such a wish; he wants nothing: if he is virtuous, I have enough for both, and he shall have it all.

"AT YOUR FEET BEHOLD YOUR CHILDREN."

SCENE VII.

To them RONDON, MME. DE CROUPILLAC, FIERENFAT, *Bailiff's Follower, Attendants.*

FIERENFAT.

Yonder he is, talking to her still; let us show ourselves men of courage, and take him by surprise.

RONDON.

Ay, let us be bold, we are six to one.

LISE.

[*To Rondon.*

Now, sir, open your eyes, and see who it is I love.

RONDON.

'Tis he.

FIERENFAT.

Who?

LISE.

Your brother.

OLD EUPHEMON.

The same, sir.

FIERENFAT.

You are pleased to jest, sir: this scoundrel my brother?

LISE.

Yes, sir.

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

Upon my honor! I am very glad to hear it.

RONDON.

What wonderful metamorphosis; why, this is my droll valet.

FIERENFAT.

So, so, I play a pretty extraordinary part here: why, what brother is this? ha!

OLD EUPHEMON.

He is your brother, sir; I had lost him; but heaven and repentance have restored him to me.

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

And luckily enough for me.

FIERENFAT.

The rascal is come back only to take away my wife from me.

YOUNG EUPHEMON.

[*To Fierenfat.*

'Tis fit, sir, that you know me; and let me tell you, sir, 'twas you took her from me, not I from you. In better days I had her heart: the folly of rash and unexperienced youth deprived me of a treasure which I did not know the value of: but on this happy day I have found again my virtue, my mistress, and my father: the rights of blood and the rights of love are at once restored to me, and perhaps you envy me the sudden, the unexpected blessings. But take my inheritance; I give it you freely: you are fond of riches, and I of her: thus shall both be happy; you in your possessions, and I in my Lise's heart.

OLD EUPHEMON.

His disinterested goodness shall not be thus re-

warded. No, Euphemon, thou shalt not be so unworthy of her.

RONDON.

Very good; very fine indeed!

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

For my part, I'm astonished, and yet not displeased: 'tis a comfort to me to think the gentleman is come on purpose to avenge, as it were, my charms.

[*To Euphemon.*

Quick, quick, sir; marry her as soon as possible; heaven is on your side, and, to be sure, made that lady on purpose for you; you were born for each other; and, by this lucky accident, 'tis ten to one if I don't recover my President.

LISE.

[*To Rondon.*

With all my heart. You, my dear father, will permit my faithful heart, which can be given but to one, to return to its right owner.

RONDON.

Why—if his brain is not quite so much turned, and—

LISE.

O I'll answer for him.

RONDON.

If he loves you; if he is prudent—

LISE.

O doubt it not.

RONDON.

And if Euphemon will give him a good fortune, why—I agree.

FIERENFAT.

To be sure, I am a great gainer in this affair, by finding a new brother; but then I lose my wedding expenses, my fortune, and a wife into the bargain.

MME. DE CROUPILLAC.

For shame, thou sordid wretch, forever in pursuit of riches! have I not, in notes, bonds, and houses, enough to live upon, and more, much more, than you deserve? Am I not your first love? Didst thou not swear fidelity to me? Have I not it all under your own hand? your madrigals without sense, your songs without wit, your promises without meaning? But we'll try it at law, sir: I'll produce them in a court of justice; and the parliament, in such a case, I am sure, ought to make an act on purpose to punish ingratitude.

RONDON.

My good friend, take care of yourself, and tremble at her resentment: let me advise you to marry, if it be only to get shut of her.

OLD EUPHEMON.

[*To Mme. de Croupillac.*

I am surprised at the passion you express for my son; methinks even the suit you threaten him with must soothe his vanity; the cause of your anger does him too much honor: but permit me to address myself to the dear object that has restored my son. Be united, my children, and embrace as brothers: and

you, my friend, [*turning to Rondon*] must return thanks to heaven, whose goodness hath done all for the best. And henceforth,

Of youth misguided, let us learn, whate'er
Their follies threaten, never to despair.

End of the Fifth and Last Act.

PREFACE TO MARIAMNE.

I have printed this piece not without fear and trembling; the number of performances which have met with applause on the stage and contempt in the closet give me but too much reason to apprehend the same fate with regard to my own. Two or three agreeable incidents, together with the art and management of the actors, might conciliate an audience in the representation; but a very different degree of merit is necessary to make it shine in the full glare of publication. Little will avail the regular conduct of it, and even, perhaps, as little the interesting nature of the subject. Every work that is written in verse, though it may be unexceptionable in all other respects, must of necessity disgust if every line is not full of strength and harmony; if there is not an elegance running through the whole; if the piece has not, in short, that inexpressible charm, which nothing but true genius can bestow upon it; that point of perfection which knowledge alone can never attain to, and concerning which we have argued so poorly, and to so little purpose, since the death of M. Despréaux.

It is a great mistake to imagine that the versification of a dramatic performance is either the easiest or the least considerable part of it. Racine, who, of all men upon earth, after Virgil, best knew the art of verse, did not think it so: he employed two whole years in writing his "Phædra." Pradon boasts of having composed his in less than three months. As the transient success of a tragedy depends, with

regard to the representation, not on the style, but on the incidents and the actors, the two seemed at first to meet with an equal degree of applause; but the publication soon determined the real and intrinsic merit of each of them. Pradon, according to the usual practice of bad authors, came out with an insolent preface; accusing all those who had attacked his piece as unfair and partial critics; a trouble which he might as well have spared himself; for his tragedy, puffed as it was by himself and his party, soon sank into that contempt which it deserves; and if it were not for the "Phædra" of Racine, the world would not know at this day that Pradon had ever written one.

But whence then arises the vast difference between these two performances? the plot is nearly the same in both. Phædra dies, Theseus is absent in the two first acts: he is supposed to be in the shades below with Pirithous. Hippolytus, his son, wants to leave Trezene, and to fly from Aricia, with whom he is in love; he declares his passion to Aricia, and listens to Phædra's with horror; he dies the same kind of death, and his governor relates the manner of it.

Add to this also, that the principal personages in both pieces, as they are in the same circumstances, say almost the same things; but this is the very place which distinguishes the great man from the bad poet; when Racine and Pradon have the same sentiments, they differ most from each other; for proof of this, let us take the declaration of Hippolytus to Aricia. Racine makes him talk thus:

> I who so long defied the tyrant's power,
> Smiled at his chains, and made a mock of love;
> Myself on shore, I saw weak mortals wrecked,
> And thought I safely might behold the storm

At distance rage, which I could never feel:
And must I sink beneath the common lot?
I must; this haughty soul at length is conquered,
And hangs on thee: for six long months despair
And shame have rent my soul; where'er I go,
The wound still rankles: with myself long time
In vain I struggled, reasoned, wept in vain:
When absent seek thee, and when present shun:
Thy image haunts me in the sylvan shade:
The daylight's splendor and the evening's gloom
All bring the loved Aricia to my eyes:
All, all, unite to make this rebel thine.
O! I have lost myself: the bow unbent,
And useless arrows lay neglected by me;
Thy lessons, Neptune, are no more remembered:
The woods re-echo to my sighs alone
Responsive, and my idle coursers now
Forget the voice of their Hippolytus.

Now observe how this Hippolytus expresses himself in Pradon.

Long time, too long, alas! with lips profane,
Laughing at love did I adore Diana;
A solitary savage long I lived
And chased the bears and lions in the forest;
But now more pressing cares employ my time,
For since I saw thee I have left off hunting,
Though once I took delight in it, but now
I never go there but to think of you.

It is impossible to read and compare these two pieces without admiring one and laughing at the other; and yet there is the same ground of thoughts and sentiments in both; when we are to make the passions speak, all men have pretty nearly the same ideas; but the manner of expressing them, distinguishes the man of wit from him who has none; the man of genius from him who has nothing but

wit; and the real poet from him who would be a poet if he could.

To arrive at Racine's perfection in writing, a man must possess his genius, and withal must polish and correct his works as he did: how diffident then should I be, born as I am with such indifferent talents, and oppressed by continual disorders, who have neither the gift of a fine imagination, nor time to correct laboriously the faults of my performances! I am sensible of and lament the imperfections of this piece, as well with regard to the conduct as the diction of it; I should have mended them a little, if I could have put off this edition for a little longer; but still I should have left a great many behind. In every art there is a certain point beyond which we can never advance: we are shut up within the limits of our talents; we see perfection lying beyond us, and only make impotent endeavors to attain to it.

I shall not make a formal and regular critique on this piece; the reader will probably save me that trouble; but it may be necessary to say something concerning a general objection to the choice of my subject. As it is the nature of Frenchmen to lay hold with rapidity on the ridicule of things in themselves the most serious, it has been said that the subject of "Mariamne" is nothing but an old amorous brutal husband; whose wife, being out of humor with him, refuses him the return of conjugal duty; to which it has been added, that a family quarrel could never make a good tragedy. I would only beg these critics to join with me in a few reflections on this strange kind of prejudice.

The plots of tragedies are genarally founded, either on the interests of a whole nation, or the private interests of the sovereign. Of the first kind are the "Iphigenia in Aulis"; where all Greece,

met in full assembly, demands the blood of the son of Agamemnon; "The Horatii," where the three combatants are to decide the fate of Rome; and "Œdipus," where the safety and prosperity of Thebes depend on the discovery of the murderer of Laius. Of the latter kind are "Britannicus," "Phædra," "Mithridates," etc. In these all the interest is confined to the hero of the piece and his family; all turns upon such passions as the vulgar feel equally with princes, the plot may be as proper for comedy as for tragedy: for, take away the names only, and Mithridates is no more than an old fellow in love with a young girl; his two sons are in love with her at the same time: and he makes use of a very low artifice to discover which of his sons the lady is fond of. Phædra is a step-mother, who, egged on by her confidante, makes love to her son-in-law, who is unfortunately pre-engaged. Nero is an impetuous young man, who falls precipitately in love, and immediately wants to be separated from his wife, and hides himself behind the tapestry to overhear the conversation of his mistress. These are all subjects which Molière might treat as well as Racine: nay, the whole plot of "The Miser" is exactly the same as that of "Mithridates;" Harpagon and the king of Pontus are two old fellows in love: each of them has a son for his rival; both of them make use of the same artifice to discover the intrigue carried on between the son and the mistress; and both pieces end in the marriage of the young men.

Molière and Racine met with equal success; one made the world laugh, amused, and entertained them; the other moved, terrified, and made us weep. Molière exposed the folly of an old miser in love; Racine painted the weakness of a great man, and so

contrived, as at the same time even to make that weakness respectable.

Were we to order Watteau and Lebrun, each of them, to paint us a wedding; one would give us the representation of a group of peasants in an arbor, full of vulgar joy and jollity, placed round a rustic table, where drunkenness, riot, debauchery, and immoderate laughter reigned without control; the other would paint the marriage of Peleus and Thetis, the feast of the gods, with all their solemn and majestic celebration of it. Thus both of them would reach the highest degree of perfection in their art, by means entirely different.

We may fairly apply every one of these examples to "Mariamne"—the bad temper of a woman; the love of an old husband; the malicious tricks of a sister-in-law; are subjects in themselves inconsiderable, and seem rather adapted to comedy; but at the same time a king, whom all the world has honored with the name of "Great," passionately enamored with the finest woman in the universe; the rage and fury of a monarch so famous for his virtues and his crimes, his past cruelty, and his present remorse; that perpetual and rapid transition from love to hatred, and from hatred to love; the ambition of his sister; the intrigues of his ministers; the distressful situation of a princess whose virtue and beauty have been so often celebrated and talked of to this day, who had seen her father and brother doomed to death by her husband; and to complete her misfortunes, saw herself beloved by the murderer of her family. What a field is here! What an opening for any genius but mine! Can we say this is a subject unfit for tragedy? Here we may indeed aver, that, according as things turn out, they change their names.

PREFACE TO ORESTES.

A Letter to Her Most Serene Highness the Duchess of Maine.

Madam—

You have seen that noble age, which is at once the model and the reproach of the present, and will be so of future generations, and have yourself made a part of its glory, by your taste and by your example; those illustrious times, when your ancestors, the Condés, crowned with laurels, cultivated the polite arts; when a Bossuet immortalized heroes, and instructed kings; when a Fénelon, the second of mankind in eloquence, and the first in the art of making virtue amiable, taught justice and humanity in the most charming manner; when Racine and Boileau presided over the belles-lettres, Lulli over music, and Lebrun over painting; all these arts, Madam, met together in your palace: there I first had the happiness, a circumstance which I shall never forget, of hearing, though I was then but a child, that excellent scholar, whose profound learning never obscured the brightness of his genius, cultivating the fine understanding of the Duke of Bourgogne, the Duke of Maine, and yourself: that happy labor, in which he was so powerfully assisted by nature. Sometimes he would take up a *"Sophocles"* or *"Euripides"* before you, and translate offhand one of their tragedies. The admiration and enthusiasm that possessed his soul, on reading those

noble performances, inspired him with expressions that answered the manly and harmonious energy of the Greek, as nearly as it was possible to reach it in the prose of a language just emerging from barbarism, and which, polished as it now is by so many fine authors, is still very deficient in point of force, copiousness, and precision. It is impossible to convey through any modern language, all the power of Greek expressions; they describe, with one stroke, what costs us a whole sentence. A single word was sufficient for them to express a mountain covered with trees, bending beneath the weight of their leaves; or a god throwing his darts to a vast distance; or, the tops of rocks struck with repeated thunderbolts. That language had not only the advantage of filling the imagination with a word, but every word, we know, had its peculiar melody, which charmed the ear while it displayed the finest pictures to the mind; and for this reason all our translations from the Greek poets are weak, dry, and poor; it is imitating palaces of porphyry with bricks and pebbles. M. de Malezieu notwithstanding, by the efforts of a sudden enthusiasm, and a vehement forcible manner of reciting, seemed to make up for the poverty of our language, and infuse into his declamation the very soul and spirit of the great Athenians. Permit me, Madam, to give you his thoughts with regard to this inventive, ingenious, and sensible people, a people from whom the Romans, their conquerors, learned everything, and who, a long time after the fall of both their empires, had yet the power to raise modern Europe from ignorance and barbarism.

He knew more of Athens than many of our travellers in these days do of Rome, after they have seen it over and over. That vast number of statues, by

the greatest masters; those pillars which adorned the public market-places; those monuments of taste and grandeur; that superb and immense theatre, built in the finest situation, between the town and the citadel, where the works of Sophocles and Euripides were heard by Pericles and Socrates; and the youth of Athens attended, not standing up, or in perpetual riot and confusion, as they do with us; in a word, everything which the Athenians had done in every art and every branch of knowledge was ever present to the mind of M. de Malezieu. He was far from falling in with the opinions of those ridiculously rigid critics and false politicians who blame the Athenians for having been too sumptuous in their public entertainments, and do not know that this very magnificence greatly enriched Athens, by attracting crowds of foreigners, who came from all parts to admire and to receive lessons from them on eloquence and virtue.

This extensive and almost universal genius was engaged by you, Madam, to translate the "*Iphigenia in Tauris*" of Euripides; a task which he executed with equal elegance, strength, and fidelity. It was represented at an entertainment which he had the honor to present your Highness, an entertainment worthy of him who gave, and of her who received it. You, I remember, Madam, played the part of Iphigenia, for I was present at the representation; and as at that time I had no acquaintance with the French stage, it never entered into my head that gallantry could ever have been mingled with so tragical a subject. I gave myself up to the manners and customs of Greece, perhaps the more easily, because I was then acquainted with no other. I admired the antique in all its noble simplicity: it was this which first suggested to me the idea of writ-

ing my tragedy of *"Œdipe,"* without ever having read Corneille's. I began, as an essay of my abilities, by translating that famous scene from Sophocles, of the double confidence of Jocaste and Œdipus. I read it to some of my friends, who frequented the theatre, and to two or three actors; they assured me it would never succeed on the French stage, and advised me to read Corneille, who had carefully avoided that part of the plot, and all agreed, that if I did not follow his example, by putting in a love intrigue, the players would never undertake it. I then read the *"Œdipe"* of Corneille, which, though it was not ranked with *"Cinna"* and *"Polyeucte,"* had, notwithstanding, met with some applause. I must confess, their opinions ran directly counter to mine, from the beginning of this affair to the end; but I was forced to submit to example, and the evil power of fashion. In the midst of all the terror of this masterpiece of antiquity, I brought in, not absolutely a love intrigue, but the remembrance of an extinguished passion,[1] which appeared to the last degree absurd; but I will not repeat here what I have already said on this subject.

Your highness may remember that I had the honor of reading my *"Œdipe"* to you; the scene from Sophocles was not condemned at that tribunal; for you, the Cardinal de Polignac, M. de Malezieu, and your whole court, unanimously condemned me, and with great reason, for having so much as mentioned the word love in a work which Sophocles finished so completely, and so successfully, without that unhappy foreign ornament; and yet the very fault which

[1] Voltaire here alludes to the part of Philoctetes in his *"Oedipe."*

you blamed me for was the only thing that recommended my performance to the stage. The players were, with the greatest difficulty, prevailed on to perform my *"Œdipe,"* which they imagined could never succeed; the public, however, were entirely of your opinion; every part of it that was written in the taste of Sophocles was generally applauded, and the love scenes condemned by the most judicious critics; to say the truth, Madam, while parricide and incest are destroying a family, and a plague laying the whole country waste, is it a season for love and gallantry? There cannot, perhaps, be two more striking proofs of theatrical absurdity, and the power of habit, than Corneille, on one side, making Theseus cry out,

Quelque ravage affreux qu'étale ici la peste,
L'absence aux vrais amans est encor plus funeste.[1]

And on the other, myself, sixty years after him, making old Jocaste talk of her old love; and all this only in compliance with a taste the most false and ridiculous that ever corrupted literature.

That a Phædra, whose character is, perhaps, the most truly theatrical that ever was exhibited, and almost the only person whom antiquity has represented in love, should express all the power and fury of that fatal passion; that a Roxana, confined within the walls of an idle seraglio, should abandon herself to love and jealousy: that Ariadne should complain to heaven and earth of cruelty and inconstancy: that Orosmanes should destroy a mistress

[1] The literal translation of which is "whatever dreadful havoc the plague may make here, absence to those who truly love is much more dreadful." There is a great deal of such nonsense in Dryden's and some other of our tragedies, but it would not go down in the present age.

whom he adored: all this is truly tragic; love, either raging, or criminal, or unhappy, or attended with remorse, draws such tears from us as we need not blush to shed; but there is no medium; love should either command as a tyrant, or not appear at all; he can never act an under part; but that Nero should hide himself behind the tapestry to overhear the conversation of his mistress and his rival; that old Mithridates should make use of a comedy trick to discover the secret of a young woman beloved by his two sons; that Maximus, even in "*Cinna,*" a piece of so much real merit, should act the part of a villain, and discover so important a conspiracy, only because he was weak enough to be in love with a woman whose passion for Cinna he must have known, and allege by way of reason, that "Love excuses all,"—for the true lover knows no friends; that old Sertorius should fall in love with a strange Spanish lady, called Víriate, and be assassinated by his rival Perpenna; all this, we will be bold enough to assert, is little, mean, and puerile; such ridiculous stuff would degrade us infinitely below the Athenians, if our great masters had not made amends for these faults, which are merely national, by those sublime beauties which are entirely the product of their own genius.

It is indeed astonishing to me, that the great tragic poets of Athens should dwell so much on those subjects where nature displays everything that is great and affecting; an Electra, an Iphigenia, a Mérope, an Alcmæon; and that our illustrious moderns, neglecting all these, should treat of scarcely anything but love, which is generally much more proper for comedy than tragedy: sometimes indeed they have endeavored to enrich and adorn it by politics; but that love which is not violent is always

cold, and all political intrigues that do not rise to the height and fury of ambition are still more cold and insipid; political reasonings and debates are very agreeable in Polybius or Machiavelli; gallantry is very fit for tales, or comedies; but nothing like this is suitable to the grandeur and pathos of true tragedy.

A taste for gallantry in our tragedies was carried to such a ridiculous excess that a great princess, whose high rank and fine understanding might in some measure excuse her believing that all the world would be of her opinion, imagined, that the parting of Titus and Berenice was an excellent subject for a tragedy: she therefore put it into the hands of two of our best writers;[1] neither of them had ever produced a performance wherein love had not played the principal or at least the second part; but one of them had never touched the heart, except in those scenes of "The Cid" which he had taken from the Spanish; the other, always tender and elegant, endowed with every species of eloquence, and above all, master of that enchanting art which draws forth the most delicate sentiments from the least and most unpromising incidents: one therefore made of Titus and Berenice as contemptible a piece as ever appeared on the stage; the other found out the secret of interesting the spectator for five acts without any other foundation but these words, "I love you, and I leave you." It was indeed nothing more than a pastoral between an emperor, a king, and a queen; and a pastoral withal infinitely less tragical than the

[1] The French expression is "deux maitres de la scene," i. e. "two masters of the scene." Corneille and Racine, the latter of whom Voltaire takes every occasion of preferring to the former, though he frequently censures both with great freedom, and generally with equal justice.

interesting scenes of *"Pastor Fido."* The success of this, however, persuaded the public and the poets, that love, and love alone, was the soul of tragedy.

It was not till long after, when he was further advanced in life, that this great poet found out that he was capable of something superior to this: when he was sorry he had enervated the drama by so many declarations of love, and sentiments of jealousy, and coquetry, much worthier, as I have already ventured to assert, of Menander, than of Sophocles and Euripides. Then he wrote his masterpiece, *"Athalie";* but though he was undeceived himself, the public was not; they could not bring themselves to conceive that a woman, a child, and a priest, could make an interesting tragedy; a work that approached nearer to perfection than any which ever came from the hand of man, remained for a long time in contempt, and its illustrious author had to his last hour the mortification of seeing the age he lived in, though greatly improved, still so corrupted with bad taste as never to do justice to his noblest performance.

It is certain, if this great man had lived, and cultivated those talents which alone made his fortune and his fame, and which therefore he should not have deserted, he would have restored to the theatre its ancient purity, and no more have degraded the great subjects of antiquity with love intrigue. He had begun an *"Iphigenia,"* and there was not a word of gallantry in his whole plan: he would never have made Agamemnon, Orestes, Electra, Telephus, or Ajax, in love: but having unhappily quitted the stage before he had reformed it, all those who followed him imitated, and even added to his faults, without copying any of his beauties. The morality of Quinault's operas was brought into almost every tragic scene: sometimes it is an Alcibiades who as-

sures us that "in those tender moments he has always proved by experience that a mortal may taste of perfect happiness"; sometimes it is an Amestris who tells us that the daughter of a great king burns with a secret flame without shame, and without fear; in another, Agnonis follows the steps of the fair Crisis in every place, the constant adorer of her divine charms; the fierce Arminius, the defender of Germany, protests to us, that he comes to read his fate in the eyes of Ismenia, and goes to the camp of Varus, to see if the fair eyes of his Ismenia will show him their wonted tenderness. In *"Amasis,"* which is only *"Mérope,"* crowded with a heap of romantic episodes, the heroine, who, three days before, at a country house, had just got sight of a young stranger, and fallen in love with him, cries out, with a great deal of regard to decency and decorum: "This is the same stranger; alas, he hath not concealed himself so much as he ought, for my repose; for the few moments when he chanced to strike my eyes I saw him and blushed, my soul was deeply moved at him." In *"Athenais,"* a prince of Persia disguises himself, in order to make his mistress a visit at the court of a Roman emperor: we fancy, in short, that we are reading the romances of Mademoiselle Scudéri, who described the citizens of Paris under the names of the heroes of antiquity.

To confirm and establish this horrid taste among us, which renders us so ridiculous in the eyes of all sensible foreigners, it unfortunately happened that M. de Longepierre, a warm admirer of antiquity, but not sufficiently acquainted with our stage, and who besides was careless in his versification, gave us his *"Electra."* We must confess it was written in the taste of the ancients, no cold ill-placed intrigue

disfigured this subject full of terror; the piece was simple, and without any episode. This procured for it, and with great reason, the patronage of so many persons of the first consideration, who flattered themselves that this valuable simplicity, which constituted the principal merit of the great geniuses of Athens, would be well received at Paris, where it had been so long neglected. You, Madam, with the late Princess of Conti, were at the head of those sanguine friends; but, unhappily, the faults of the French piece were so numerous, in comparison with the beauties which he had borrowed from the Greek, that you yourself acknowledged, at the representation, that it was a statue of Praxiteles disfigured by a modern artist. You had resolution enough to give up a thing which was not in reality worthy of being supported, well knowing, that favor and protection, thrown away on bad performances, are as prejudicial to the advancement of wit and good sense as the unjust censure of real merit; but the downfall of "*Electra*" was a terrible stroke to the partisans of antiquity. The critics availed themselves of the faults of the copy, the better to decry the merit of the original; and to complete the corruption of our taste, we persuaded ourselves it was impossible to support, without love and romance, those subjects which the Greeks had never debased by such episodes; it was pretended that we might admire the Greek tragedians in the reading, but that it was impossible to imitate them without being condemned by our own age and nation: strange contradiction! for, surely, if the reading really pleased us, how could the representation displease?

We should not, I acknowledge, endeavor to imitate what is weak and defective in the ancients: it is most probable that their faults were very well known

to their contemporaries. I am satisfied, Madam, that the wits of Athens condemned, as well as you, some of those repetitions, and some declamations with which Sophocles has loaded his *"Electra;"* they must have observed that he had not dived deep enough into the human heart. I will moreover fairly confess, that there are beauties peculiar not only to the Greek language, but to the climate, to manners and times, which it would be ridiculous to transplant hither. I have not copied exactly therefore the *"Electra"* of Sophocles, much more I knew would be necessary; but I have taken, as well as I could, all the spirit and substance of it. The feast celebrated by Ægisthus and Clytemnestra, which they called "The feast of Agamemnon;" the arrival of Orestes and Pylades; the urn which was supposed to contain the ashes of Orestes; the ring of Agamemnon; the character of Electra, and that of Iphisa, which is exactly the Chrysothemis of Sophocles; and above all, the remorse of Clytemnestra; these I have copied from the Greek tragedy. When the messenger, who relates the fictitious story of the death of Orestes, says to Clytemnestra, "I see, Madam, you are deeply affected at his death;" she replies: "I am a mother, and must therefore be unhappy; a mother, though injured, cannot hate her own offspring." She even endeavors to justify herself to Electra, with regard to the murder of Agamemnon, and laments her daughter. Euripides has carried Clytemnestra's repentance still further. This, Madam, was what gained the applause of the most judicious and sensible people upon earth, and was approved by all good judges in our own nation. No character, in reality, can be more natural than that of a woman, criminal with regard to her husband, yet softened by her children; a woman, whose proud

and fiery disposition is still open to pity and compassion, who resumes the fierceness of her character on receiving too severe reproaches, and at last sinks into submission and tears. The seeds of this character were in Sophocles and Euripides, and I have only unfolded them. Nothing but ignorance, and its natural attendant, presumption, can assert that the ancients have nothing worthy of our imitation; there is scarcely one real and essential beauty and perfection, for the foundation of which, at least, we are not indebted to them.

I have taken particular care not to depart from that simplicity so strongly recommended by the Greeks, and so difficult to attain, the true mark of genius and invention; and the very essence of all theatrical merit. A foreign character, brought into *"Œdipus"* or *"Electra,"* who should play a principal part, and draw aside the attention of the audience, would be a monster in the eyes of all those who have any knowledge of the ancients, or of that nature which they have so finely painted. Art and genius consist in finding everything within the subject, and never going out of it in search of additional ornaments; but how are we to imitate that truly tragic pomp and magnificence which we find in the verses of Sophocles, that natural elegance and purity of diction, without which the piece, howsoever well conducted in other respects, must after all be but a poor performance!

I have at least given my countrymen some idea of a tragedy without love, without confidants, and without episodes: the few partisans of good taste acknowledge themselves obliged to me for it, though the rest of the world withhold their approbation for a time, but will come in at last, when the rage of party is over, the injustice of persecution at an end,

and the clouds of ignorance dissipated. You, Madam, must preserve among us those glittering sparks of light which the ancients have transmitted to us; we owe everything to them; not an art was born among us; everything was transplanted; but the earth that bears these foreign fruits is worn out, and our ancient barbarism, by the help of false taste, would break out again in spite of all our culture and improvement; and the disciples of Athens and Rome become Goths and Vandals, corrupted with the manners of the Sybarites, without the kind favor and protection of persons of your rank. When nature has given them either genius, or the love of genius, they encourage this nation, which is better able to imitate than to invent; and which always looks up toward the great for those instructions and examples of which it perpetually stands in need. All that I wish for, Madam, is, that some genius may be found to finish what I have but just sketched out; to free the stage from that effeminacy and affectation into which it is now sunk; to render it respectable to the gravest characters; worthy of the few great masterpieces which we already have among us; worthy, in short, the approbation of a mind like yours, and all those who may hereafter endeavor to resemble you.

PREFACE TO CATILINE.

(*This "Advertisement" is prefixed in the first edition.*)

[This tragedy differs in many respects from that which appeared at Paris under the same title in 1752, when it was transcribed from the representation by some vile copyists, who most shamefully disfigured it; the parts then omitted were filled up by other hands, and over a hundred verses interpolated not written by the author of *"Catiline."* From this imperfect copy was published a surreptitious edition, full of errors from beginning to end, which was followed by another in Holland, still more faulty. The present edition was carefully inspected by the author himself, who even altered several whole scenes in it. It is certainly a most flagrant abuse, which calls every day for redress, that the works of authors should be printed in spite of themselves. A bookseller is in a hurry to publish a bad edition of a work that falls into his hands, and this very bookseller will afterward complain most bitterly, when the author whom he has injured gives us the performance as it really is. Such is the miserable condition of modern literature.]

PREFACE.

Two motives induced me to make choice of a subject for tragedy, which seemed on the first view of it but ill adapted to the manners and customs of the French theatre. I was willing to endeavor once more, by a tragedy without any declarations of love

in it, to put an end to the reproaches so often thrown out against us in the learned world, of filling our stage with nothing but gallantry and intrigue, and at the same time to make our young men, who frequent the theatre, better acquainted with Cicero. The amazing grandeur of Rome in past times still commands the attention of all mankind; and modern Italy derives part of her glory from the discoveries she is every day making of the ruins of the ancient. The house where Cicero lived is shown to us with some degree of veneration, his name is echoed by every tongue, and his writings are in every hand. Those who are unable to inform us who presided at the courts of justice within these fifty years in their own country, can tell you when Cicero was at the head of Rome. The more light we have into the last period of the Roman commonwealth the more do we admire this great man; though it must be confessed that most of our too lately civilized nations have entertained very false and imperfect ideas concerning him; his works indeed made a part of our education, but we remained still ignorant of his true merit; the author was superficially studied, the consul almost utterly unknown; the lights which we have since acquired let us into his real character, and set him far above all those who ever were employed in the affairs of government, or were distinguished by their eloquence.

Cicero might, perhaps, have been anything, and everything that he chose to be; he gained a victory in the town of Issus, where Alexander had conquered the Persians; it is very probable, that if he had applied himself entirely to the art of war, a profession which requires a good understanding, and extraordinary industry, he would have shone among the most illustrious commanders of his age;

but as Cæsar would have been but the second of orators, Cicero would have been but the second of generals: he preferred to all other glory that of being the father of Rome, the mistress of the world; and how extraordinary must have been the merit of a private gentleman of Arpinum, who could make his way through such a number of great men, and attain, without intrigue, the most exalted place in the whole universe, in spite of the envy and malice of so many Patricians, who at that time bore sway in Rome!

What we have still more reason to be astonished at is, that amidst a thousand cares and disquietudes, and during a whole tempestuous life, burdened as he was both by public and private affairs, this wonderful man could yet find leisure to acquaint himself with all the various sects of religion in Greece, and shine forth one of the greatest philosophers, as well as orators, of his age. Are there many ministers, magistrates, or lawyers, now in Europe, of any eminence, who are able, I will not say to explain the discoveries of Newton, or the ideas of Leibnitz, in the same manner as Cicero illustrated the principles of Zeno, Plato, and Epicurus, but even to solve any difficult problem in philosophy?

Cicero, a circumstance which very few are acquainted with, was withal one of the best poets of the age he lived in, when poetry was yet in its infant state; he even rivalled Lucretius. Can anything be more beautiful than these verses yet remaining of his poem on Marius, which make us still regret the loss of that excellent performance?

Hic Jovis altisoni subito pinnata satelles
Arboris e trunco, serpentis saucia morsu,
Ipsa feris subigit transfigens unguibus anguem

Semianimum, et varia graviter cervice micantem:
Quem se intorquentem lanians, rostroque cruentans,
Jam satiata animos, jam duros ulta dolores
Abjicet efflantem, et laceratum affligit in undas
Seque obitu a solis nitidos convertit ad ortus.

I am thoroughly persuaded that our language is incapable of expressing the harmonious energy of Greek and Latin verses; I will, however, venture to give a slight sketch from this little picture, painted by the great man whom I have characterized in my "Rome Preserved," and whose Catiline I have imitated in some parts of the tragedy.

Thus wounded by an earth-born serpent flies
The bird of Jove, and in his talons bears
His struggling foe; the dying reptile wreaths
His tortured scales that glitter in the sun:
Till the fierce eagle drops his bleeding prey,
Soars to the skies, and seeks his native heaven.

Those who have the least spark of taste will perceive, even in this imperfect copy, the force of the original; whence comes it then that Cicero should pass for a bad poet? Simply because Juvenal has thought fit to say so, and imputed to him that ridiculous verse,

O fortunatam natam me consule Roman!

So ridiculous that the French poet, who was desirous of pointing out the absurdity of it in a translation, could not succeed in it:

O Rome fortunée sous mon consulat née

does not express half the nonsense of the Latin.

Is it possible the author of those fine verses I just now quoted could ever write anything so ridiculous! there are follies which a man of sense and genius

can never be guilty of: but the real truth is that prejudice, which will never allow two species of excellency to one man, denied Cicero's ability to make verses, because he himself thought fit to renounce it. Some low buffoon, who envied the reputation of this great man, wrote that foolish verse, and attributed it to the orator, the philosopher, the father of Rome. Juvenal, in the succeeding age, adopted this popular error, and handed it down to posterity in his satirical declamations. I believe many a reputation both good and bad is established in the same manner. These two verses, for instance, are imputed to Malebranche:

Il fait en ce beau jour le plus beau tems du monde
Pour aller a cheval sur la terre et sur l'onde.

To which it is added, that he made them purposely to show that a philosopher could be a poet whenever he had a mind to. What man, with common sense, could ever be persuaded that Malebranche was capable of writing anything so absurd? Yet let a retailer of anecdotes, or a literary compiler, transmit this idle tale to posterity, and in process of time it will gain credit; and though Malebranche was one of the greatest of men, it will be said one day or other that this great man turned fool when he got out of his sphere.

Cicero has been reproached for too much sensibility, and too much dejection in adversity; he imparts his well-grounded complaints to his wife and friends, and his frankness is imputed to cowardice; but let who will blame him for pouring into the bosom of friendship that grief which he concealed from his persecutors, I love him the more for it; the virtuous soul alone is capable of feeling. Cicero, fond as he was of glory, had no ambition of appear-

ing to be what he was not. We have seen men in our own times dying with grief at the loss of very trifling emoluments, after a ridiculous pretence of not regretting them at all. What is there then so mean or cowardly in acknowledging to a wife or friend that a man was unhappy at being banished from his country, which he had served, or at being persecuted by a set of ungrateful and perfidious villains? Surely we ought to shut our hearts against the tyrants who oppress us, and open them to those we love.

Cicero was free and ingenuous throughout his whole conduct; he spoke of his afflictions without shame, and of his thirst after true glory without disguise: this character is natural, at the same time that it is great. Shall we prefer to this the policy of Cæsar, who tells us in his "Commentaries," that he offered peace to Pompey, and yet in his private letters vows that he never had any such intention? Cæsar was a great man, but Cicero was an honest man: but his having been a good poet, and philosopher, an excellent governor, or an able general, his having had a feeling and a good heart, are not points that concern our present purpose. He saved Rome in spite of the senate; one-half of which at least opposed him, from motives of the most inveterate envy and malice; even those whose oracle, whose deliverer and avenger he was, were among his worst foes; he laid the foundation of his own ruin by the most signal service that man ever performed for his country. To represent this is the principal design of the tragedy; it is not so much the ferocious spirit of Catiline, as the generous and noble soul of Cicero, which I have there endeavored to describe.

It has always been asserted, and the opinion gains

ground among us, that Cicero is one of those characters which should never be brought upon the stage.

The English, who hazard everything without knowing what they hazard, have given us a tragedy on the conspiracy of Catiline, wherein Ben Jonson has made no scruple of translating seven or eight pages of Tully's oration; he has even translated them into prose, not imagining it possible to make Cicero speak in verse. The consul's prose, to say the truth, mingled with the verse of the other characters, forms a contrast worthy of the barbarous age of Ben Jonson; but to treat a subject so grave, and withal so totally void of those passions which generally captivate the heart, we must have to do with a serious and cultivated people, worthy in some measure of having the manners of ancient Rome exhibited before them. I acknowledge at the same time that this subject is not well adapted to our stage: we have much more taste, decorum, and knowledge of the theatre than the English, but our manners for the most part are not so strong. We are only pleased with the struggle of those passions which we ourselves experience; those among us who are best acquainted with the works of Cicero and the Roman republic are not frequenters of a play house, they do not in this respect follow the example of Tully himself, who, we know, was constantly there. It is astonishing that they should pretend to more gravity than he; they have only less taste for the fine arts, or they are withheld by a ridiculous prejudice. What progress soever those arts may have made in France, those gentlemen of distinguished genius and abilities who have cultivated them among us have not yet imparted true taste to the whole nation. We are not born so happy as the

Greeks and Romans, but frequent the theatre more out of idleness than from any real regard to literature.

This tragedy seems rather to be made for the closet than the stage; it met with applause indeed, and even more than "Zaïre," but it is not of such a species as to support itself on the stage like "Zaïre:" still it is written with more strength. The single scene between Cæsar and Catiline was executed with more difficulty than half those pieces which are filled with nothing but love; but to these the heart returns with pleasure, whilst our admiration of the ancient Romans is quickly exhausted. In our times nobody enters into conspiracies, but everybody is in love. The representation of Catiline requires withal a large company of actors, and a magnificent apparatus.

The learned will not here meet with a faithful narrative of Catiline's conspiracy; a tragedy, they very well know, is not a history, but they will see a true picture of the manners of those times: all that Cicero, Catiline, Cato and Cæsar do in this piece is not true, but their genius and character are faithfully represented; if we do not there discover the eloquence of Cicero, we shall at least find displayed all that courage and virtue which he showed in the hour of danger. In Catiline is described that contrast of fierceness and dissimulation which formed his real character; Cæsar is represented as growing into power, factious, and brave; that Cæsar who was born at once to be the glory and the scourge of Rome.

I have not brought on the stage the deputies of the Allobroges, who were not the ambassadors of Gaul, but agents of a petty province of Italy, subject to the Romans, who only appeared in the low character of informers, and were therefore not proper

persons to appear in company with Cicero, Cæsar, and Cato.

If this performance should appear tolerably well written, and to give us some idea of ancient Rome, it is all that the author pretends to, and all the reward which he expects from it.

PREFACE TO MÉROPE.

A Letter from the Jesuit Tournemine to Father Brumoy, on the Tragedy of Mérope.

Rev. Father.—The Mérope which you desired to be returned last night, I have sent you this morning at eight o'clock. I have taken time to read it with attention. Whatever success the fluctuating taste of Paris may think proper to bestow on it, I am satisfied that posterity will applaud it as one of our best performances, and indeed as the model of true tragedy. Aristotle, the legislator of the stage, has allotted to Mérope the first rank among the fine subjects for tragedy. It is treated by Euripides, we know, and in such a manner, as we learn from Aristotle, that whenever his Cresphontes was exhibited at Athens, that ingenious people, who were accustomed to the finest dramatic performances, were struck, ravished and transported in the most extraordinary manner. If the taste of Paris should not correspond with that of Athens, we know which is to blame. The Cresphontes of Euripides is lost; M. Voltaire has restored it to us. You, my dear sir, who have given us an Euripides in French, exactly as he appeared to admiring Greece, have acknowledged in the Mérope of our illustrious friend, the natural, the simple, and the pathetic of Euripides. M. Voltaire has preserved the simplicity of the subject, has not only disencumbered it from superfluous episodes, but from many unnecessary scenes also; the danger of Ægisthus alone fills the stage; the interest in-

creases from scene to scene, till we come to the catastrophe, the surprise of which is managed and prepared with the greatest art. We expect it indeed from the grandson of Alcides. Everything passes upon the stage as it did in Mycenæ. The theatrical strokes are not forced and unnatural; nor such as, by their great degree of the marvellous, shock all probability: they arise entirely from the subject; it is the historical event represented to us in the most lively manner. It is impossible not to be deeply moved and affected by that scene where Narbas arrives, at the very instant when Mérope is going to sacrifice her son, on a supposition that she is about to avenge him: or by that scene, where she has no other means of saving him from inevitable death, than by revealing him to the tyrant. The fifth act equals, if not surpasses, any of those few excellent last acts, which our stage has to boast of. Everything passes without; notwithstanding which the author has so artfully and judiciously contrived, as to bring all the action before us; the narration by Ismenia is not one of those studied artificial pieces which are foreign to the subject; where the poet's wit is made to shine out of its place, such as throw an air of coldness and insipidity over the whole fable. This is nothing but action throughout. The trouble and agitation visible in Ismenia are expressive of the tumult she describes. I say nothing of the versification, which is more clear and beautiful than any I remember to have seen, even in Voltaire, who is certainly an excellent poet; all those, in short, who feel an honest indignation at the corruption and depravity of our present taste; all who have at heart the reformation of our stage; who wish, that, by a careful imitation of the Greeks, whom in many perfections of the drama we have surpassed, we might

endeavor to obtain the true end and design of it, by making the theatre what it might be made, the school of virtue: all those, who think thus rationally and seriously, must be pleased to see so great and celebrated a poet as Voltaire employing his fine talents in such a tragedy as this, without love in it.

He has not imprudently hazarded the success of so noble a design; but in the place of love has substituted sentiments of virtue, which are not less forcible. As much prejudiced as we are in favor of tragedies founded on love intrigues, it is nevertheless true—and we have often observed it—that those tragedies, which have met with the greatest success, were not indebted to their love scenes for it: on the other hand, all our good critics allow that romantic gallantry has disgraced and degraded our stage, and some of our best writers also. The great Corneille was sensible of this; he submitted, not without reluctance, to the reigning taste of the age; not venturing to banish love entirely, he went at least so far as to banish successful love; he would not permit it to appear weak or mean, but raised it even to heroism, choosing rather to go beyond nature than to sink it into a too tender and contagious passion.

Thus, reverend father, have I sent you that judgment of which your illustrious friend seemed desirous; I wrote it in haste, which is a proof of my regard; but the paternal friendship which I have had for him, even from his infancy, has not so far prevailed as to blind me in his favor. You will let him see what I have written. I have the honor to be, my dear friend, my dear son, the glory of your father, as I ever must be, sincerely yours,

Dec. 23, 1738. TOURNEMINE.

PREFACE TO THE PRODIGAL.

It is pretty extraordinary, that this comedy should never yet have made its appearance in print, as it is now almost two years since it was first played, and ran about thirty nights: as the author of it was not known, it has hitherto been attributed to several persons of the first character; but it was indisputably written by M. de Voltaire, though the style of the *"Henriade"* and *"Alzire"* are so extremely different from the style of this, that we cannot easily conceive them to be the product of the same pen.

In his name we have here presented it to the public, as the first comedy ever written in verses[1] consisting of five feet; a novelty which may perhaps induce other authors to make use of this measure: it will at least be productive of variety on the French

[1] It is astonishing that it should ever enter into the head of a dramatic writer to put his comedies into rhyme; but it is still more astonishing that the sensible and ingenious Voltaire should adopt a custom so ridiculous; confining his verses to five feet has certainly nothing but the novelty to recommend it; they are even perhaps more faulty than if they had fifteen, by the quicker return of the same sounds to our ear. What pleasure a French author, or a French audience, might take in them we cannot pretend to determine; but they are certainly very perplexing to a translator, who finds it extremely difficult to reduce poetic language and high-flown metaphors to easy and familiar dialogue, without departing too much from the original. The English reader will frequently, I am afraid, meet with a stiffness of style in this comedy, which, with all the pains I have taken, it was impossible to avoid: add to this, that the names of Fierenfat, Lise, Martha, etc., sound but uncouthly to us; and to change them was a liberty which I thought a translator had no right to take.

stage, and whoever gives us new pleasures, has always a right to a favorable reception.

If comedy should be an exact representation of manners, this piece has sufficient merit to recommend it: we see in "The Prodigal" a mixture of the serious and pleasant; the comic, and the affecting; thus the life of man itself is always checkered, and sometimes even a single incident will produce all these contrasts. Nothing more common than a family, wherein the father grumbles, the daughter, who is in love, whimpers, the son laughs at them both, and the relatives take different parts as it happens to suit their inclinations; we often make a joke of that in one room, which we cry at in the next: nay, the same person has often laughed and cried at the same thing within a quarter of an hour.

A certain lady of fashion, being one day at the bedside of her daughter, who lay dangerously ill, with all the family about her, burst into a flood of tears, and cried out: *"O my God, my God, restore me my dear daughter, and take all my other children;"* a gentleman, who had married one of her daughters, came up to her immediately, and taking her by the sleeve: *"Pray, madam,"* says he *"do you include your sons-in-law?"* The arch dryness with which he spoke those words had such an effect on the afflicted lady that she burst into a loud laugh, and went out; the company followed her, and laughed too; and the sick person, as soon as she heard the cause of their mirth, laughed more heartily than all the rest.

We don't mean to infer from this, that every comedy should have some scenes of humor and drollery, and others serious and affecting; there are a great many good pieces where there is nothing but gayety, others entirely serious; others where they are mixed,

and others where the tender and pathetic are carried so far as to produce tears. Neither of these different species should be excluded from the stage; and if I was to be asked, which is the best of them, I should say, that which was best executed.

It would perhaps be agreeable to the present taste for reasoning, and not unsuitable to this occasion, to examine here, what kind of pleasantry that is which makes us laugh in a comedy. The cause of laughter is one of those things easier felt than expressed; the admirable Molière, Regnard, who is sometimes almost as admirable as Molière, and the authors of several excellent shorter pieces, have contented themselves with raising this pleasing sensation without explaining to us the reasons of it, or telling their secret.

I have observed, with regard to the stage, that violent peals of universal laughter seldom rise but from some mistake: Mercury taken for Sofia; Menechmes for his brother; Crispin making his own will under the name of old master Géronte; Valère talking to Harpagon of the beauty of his daughter, whilst Harpagon imagines he is talking of the beauty of his strong box; Pourceaugnac, when they feel his pulse, and want to make him pass for a madam; in a word, mistakes of this kind are generally the only things that excite laughter: Harlequin seldom raises a smile, except when he makes some blunder, and this accounts for the propriety of the name of Balourd, usually given to him.

There are a great many other species of the comic, and pleasantries, that cause a different sort of entertainment; but I never saw what we call laughing from the bottom of one's soul, either on the stage, or in company, except in cases nearly resembling those which I just now mentioned;

there are several ridiculous characters which please, without causing that immoderate laughter of joy. Trissotin and Vadius, for example, are of this kind: "The Gamester", and "The Grumbler" likewise, give us inexpressible pleasure, but never cause any bursts of laughter.

There are besides other characters of ridicule, that have in them a mixture of vice, which we love to see well painted, though they only give us a serious pleasure; a bad man will never make us laugh, because laughter always arises from a gayety of disposition, absolutely incompatible with contempt and indignation; it is true, indeed, we laugh at Tartuffe, but not at his hypocrisy; it is at the mistake of the good old gentleman, who takes him for a saint: the hypocrisy once discovered we laugh no longer, but feel very different impressions.

One might easily trace the spring of every other sentiment, and show the cause of gayety, curiosity, interest, emotion, and tears. It would be a proper employment for some of our dramatic authors to lay open these secret springs, as they are the persons who put them in motion: but they are too busy in moving the passions, to find time for an examination into them; they know that one sentiment is worth a hundred definitions, and I am too much of their opinion to prefix a treatise of philosopy to a dramatic performance. I shall content myself with only insisting a little on the necessity we are under of having something new. If we had never brought anything into the tragic scene but the Roman grandeur, it would have grown at least very disgustful; and if our heroes had breathed nothing but love and tenderness, we should by this time have been heartily sick of them:

O imitatores servum pecus!

The works which we have seen since the times of Corneille, Molière, Racine, Quinault, Lulli, and Lebrun, all seem to me to have something new and original, which has saved them from contempt and oblivion: once more therefore I repeat it, every species is good but that which tires us: we should never therefore say, such a piece of music did not succeed, such a picture was not agreeable, such a play was damned, because it was of a new kind; but such or such a thing failed, because it was really good for nothing.

PREFACE TO NANINE.

This trifle was exhibited in the summer of 1749, at Paris, among a number of entertainments which each year constantly produces in that city; in the still more numerous crowd of pamphlets, with which the town is overrun, there appeared at this time one extremely well worthy of notice, an ingenious and learned dissertation, by a member of the Academy of Rochelle, on a question which seems for some years past to have divided the literary world, namely, whether we should write serious comedies? The author declares vehemently against this new species of the drama, to which, I am afraid, the little comedy of "Nanine" belongs: he condemns and with reason, everything that carries with it the air of a city tragedy; in reality, what can be more ridiculous, than a tragic plot carried on by low and vulgar characters? it is demeaning the buskin, and confounding tragedy and comedy, by a kind of bastard species, a monster, that could only owe its birth to an incapacity of succeeding either in one or the other: this judicious writer blames, above all, those romantic forced intrigues which are to draw tears from the spectators, and which we call, by way of ridicule, "the crying comedy;" but into what species of comedy should such intrigues be admitted? Would they not be looked upon as essential and unpardonable faults in any performance whatsoever? He concludes by observing, that if, in a comedy, pity may sometimes go so far as to melt into tears, they should be shed by love alone;

he cannot certainly mean by this the passion of love as it is represented in our best tragedies, furious, barbarous, destructive, attended with guilt and remorse; but love, gentle and tender, which alone is fit for comedy.

This reflection naturally produces another, which I shall submit to the judgment of the learned: that among us tragedy has begun by appropriating to itself the language of comedy; we may observe that love, in many of those performances where terror and pity should be the chief springs, is treated as it should be treated in comedy. Gallantry, declarations of love, coquetry, archness and familiarity, are all to be met with among the heroes and heroines of Greece and Rome, with which our tragedies abound: so that, in effect, the natural and tender love in our comedies is not stolen from the tragic muse; it is not Thalia who has committed a theft upon Melpomene, but, on the other hand, Melpomene, who for a long time has worn the buskins of Thalia.

If we cast our eyes on the first tragedies that had such amazing success in the time of Cardinal Richelieu, the "Sophonisba" of Mairet, "Mariamne," "Tyrannic Love," and "Alcyone," we shall remark that love, in every one of them, talks in a style quite familiar, and sometimes extremely low; no less ridiculous than the pompous tone and emphasis of their heroism; this is perhaps the reason why, at that time, we had not one tolerable comedy, because the tragic scene had stole away all its rights and privileges; it is even probable, that this determined Molière seldom to bestow upon his lovers any strong, lively, and interesting passion for one another; tragedy, he perceived, had anticipated him in this particular.

From the time when the "Sophonisba" of Mairet appeared, which was our first regular tragedy, we began to consider the declarations of love from our heroes, and the artful and coquettish replies of our heroines, together with strong pictures of love and gallantry, as things essentially necessary to the tragic scene: there are writings of those times still extant which quote the following verses, spoken by Massinissa after the battle of Cirta, not without great eulogiums on their extraordinary merit.

> By mutual flames I find my flame approved
> And love the more, the more I am beloved;
> Sighs grow by sighs, and wishes wishes form,
> As waves by waves are lashed into a storm;
> When two fond hearts indulgent Hymen chains,
> Alike should be their pleasures and their pains.

The custom of talking thus about love corrupted even some of our best writers; even those whose manly and sublime geniuses were made to restore tragedy to its ancient splendor could not escape the contagion; in some of our finest pieces we meet with, "an unhappy face, that subdued the courage of a Roman knight." [1] The lover says to his mistress: "Adieu, thou too virtuous, and too charming object;" [2] to which the heroine replies: "Adieu thou too unhappy and too perfect lover." [3] Cleopatra tells us, that a princess, "who loves her reputation, if she owns her love, is sure to be beloved;" [4] and that Cæsar, "sighs, and in a plaintive tone acknowledges

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[1]. . . . un malheureux visage,
Qui d'un Chevalier Romain captiva le courage.

[2]Adieu, trop vertueux objet, et trop charmant.

[3]Adieu, trop malheureux, et trop parfait amant.

[4]. . . . aimant sa renommée
En avouant qu'elle aime est sûre d'être aimée.

himself her captive, even in the field of victory;"[1] adding, that she alone must be cruel, and make Cæsar unhappy. Her confidante replies: "I would venture to swear that your charms boast a power which they will never make use of."[2]

In all those pieces of the same author, which were written after his "Death of Pompey," we are sorry to find the passion of love always treated in this familiar manner; but, without taking the unnecessary trouble of producing more examples of these glaring absurdities, let us only consider some of the best verses which the author of *"Cinna"* has brought on the stage as maxims of gallantry. "There are certain secret ties, and sympathetic feelings, by whose soft affinity souls are linked together, attached to, and struck by each other by I know not what charm, which it is impossible to account for." Would one ever conceive that these sentiments, which are certainly highly comic, come out of the mouth of a princess of Parthia, who goes to her lover to ask her mother's life? In such a dreadful crisis, who would talk of the"sympathetic feelings by whose soft affinity souls are linked together?" Would Sophocles ever have produced such madrigals? Do not all these amorous sentiments belong to comedy only?

That great writer, who has carried the harmony of verse to such a point of perfection, he who made love speak a language at once so noble and so

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[1] . . . . trace des soupirs, et d'un style plaintif,
Dans son champ de victoire il se dit son captif.

[2] J'oserois bien jurer que vos charmans appas
Se vantent d'un pouvoir dont ils n'useront pas.

I have here given the original of these few short quotations, that the reader may see the full force, both of the absurdity, and of M. Voltaire's ridicule of it.

pathetic, has, notwithstanding, brought into his tragedies several scenes which Boileau thought much more proper for the elevated style of Terence's comedies, than suitable to the dignity of the great rival of Euripides, who is even sometimes superior to him. One might quote more than a hundred verses in this taste; not but that this familiar simplicity has its beauties, and may serve by way of preparation for the pathetic; but if these strokes of simplicity belong even to the tragic muse, with still more reason do they suit high comedy: this is the exact point where tragedy descends, and comedy raises itself; where the two arts meet, as it were, and touch each other; here their several limits are confounded: and if Orestes and Hermione are permitted to say:

"O do not wish for the fate of Pyrrhus; I should hate you too much—you would love me still more: O that you would look on me in another manner! You wish to love me, and yet I cannot please you: you would love me, madam, by wishing me to hate —for, in short, he hates you; his heart is otherwise engaged; he has no longer—"

"Who told you, my lord, that he despises me? do you think the sight of me inspires contempt?"

If these heroes, I say, express themselves in this familiar manner, with how much greater reason should we admire the Misanthrope speaking thus with vehemence to his mistress?

"Rather blush you, for so you ought, I have too sure testimony of your falsehood—it was not in vain that my love was alarmed, but think not I will tamely bear the injury without being revenged—'tis a treason, a perfidy which cannot be too severely punished; yes, I will give a loose to my resentment, I am no longer master of myself, passion entirely pos-

sesses me: mortally wounded as I am by you, my senses are no longer under the government of reason."

Certainly, if all "The Misanthrope" was in this taste, it would no longer be a comedy; and if Orestes and Hermione talked throughout in the manner they do in the lines above quoted, it would be no tragedy: but after these two very different species met thus together, they fall back each into their proper sphere; one resumes the pleasant style, and the other the sublime.

Comedy, therefore, I repeat once more, may be impassioned, may be in transport, or in tears, provided at the same time that it makes the good and virtuous smile; but if it was entirely destitute of the *vis comica,* if, from beginning to end, it had nothing in it but the serious and melancholy, it would then be a species of writing very faulty and very disagreeable. It must be acknowledged that there is no small difficulty in making the spectators pass insensibly from tears to laughter, and yet this transition, hard as it is to manage in a comedy, is not the less natural. We have already remarked in another place, that nothing is more common than accidents that afflict the mind, some certain circumstances of which may, notwithstanding, excite at least a momentary mirth and gayety: thus, unhappily for us, is human nature framed. Homer represents even his gods laughing at Vulcan's awkwardness, while they are deciding the fate of the whole universe. Hector smiles at the fears of his son, Astyanax, while Andromache is shedding tears. We often see, that even amid the horror of battles, conflagrations, and all the disasters that mortals are subject to, a good thing, luckily hit off, will raise a laugh, even in the bosom of terror and pity. In the battle of Spires, a regiment was

forbidden to give quarter, a German officer begged his life of one of ours, who answered him thus: "Sir, ask anything in the world else, but as to your life, I can't possibly grant it." This dry and whimsical answer passed from one to another, and everybody laughed in the midst of slaughter and destruction; why therefore should not laughter follow the most serious and affecting scenes in a comedy? Don't we sympathize with Alcmene's distress, and yet laugh with Sofia? How ridiculous it is to dispute against experience! if those who still contest this matter love rhyme better than reason, let them take the following verses:

O'er this strange world still reigns the tyrant love,
And all by turns his powerful influence prove;
Sometimes a mighty empire he o'erthrows,
Now soars in lofty verse, now creeps in prose;
Sometimes in tragic garb his passion mourns,
Sometimes the humbler comic muse adorns:
Fire in his eyes, and arrows in his hand,
He spreads or pains, or pleasures through the land:
In plaintive elegy his carols sweet
Now sings, now jocund laughs at Sylvia's feet:
For ever varying, and for ever new,
From serious Maro down to gay Chaulieu:
Bound by no laws, and to no verse confined,
He rules o'er every state, and every mind,
The universal idol of mankind.

[1]PREFACE TO SOCRATES.

The original footnote shows that Voltaire wrote this as *"Mr. Fatima."* For some unknown reason, or as a mere whim.

It has been said by one author, and repeated by another, that the simple representation of a merely virtuous man, without passion or intrigue, cannot possibly meet with applause on the stage, which I look upon as an injurious reflection on human nature, and the falsehood of it is sufficiently proved by this performance, written by the late Mr. Thomson. The famous Mr. Addison was a long time in doubt as to whether he should make Socrates or Cato the subject of his tragedy; he thought Cato a virtuous man, and as such a proper object of imitation; but that Socrates was much superior to him: the virtue of the latter, he observed, had more softness and humanity in it, and was withal more resigned to the will of God than that of the former: the Grecian, he used to say, did not, like the Roman, imagine that he was at liberty to destroy himself, or to quit the post which God had allotted to him; Addison, in short, considered Cato as the victim of liberty,

[1] What reasons M. Voltaire might have for not acknowledging himself the author of "Socrates" on its first publication we cannot determine: those amongst our readers however, who have any acquaintance with the English stage will easily perceive that the whole story in the preface about Addison, Thomson, and Lord Lyttleton, is nothing but pure fiction, designed to conceal the real author of this motley performance.

and Socrates as the martyr of wisdom. Sir Richard Steele, however, persuaded him that Cato was a subject better adapted to the theatre than the other, and at the same time likely to prove more agreeable to the nation, while it was in a political ferment. To say the truth, the death of Socrates would perhaps have made very little impression in a country where no man is ever persecuted on account of his religion; where a general toleration has so prodigiously enriched and peopled the community; as it has also in Holland, my native country. Sir Richard Steele says expressly, in his *Tatler,* that the subject of a dramatic piece should always be the reigning vice or foible of the nation where it is represented. The success which Addison met with in his Cato encouraged him to sketch out the death of Socrates, in three acts. The place of secretary of state, which he had some time after, prevented his finishing this work; he gave the manuscript to his pupil, Mr. Thomson, who was afraid to hazard on the stage a subject so extremely grave, and at the same time void of all those fashionable embellishments which had then taken possession of the English theatre.

He began therefore with some other tragedies, "Sophonisba," "Coriolanus,"[1] "Tancred," etc., and finished with the "Death of Socrates," which he wrote in prose scene by scene, and showed to his illustrious friends, Mr. Doddington and Mr. Lyttleton, persons deservedly ranked among the first geniuses in England. These two gentlemen, whom he always consulted, advised him to follow the example of Shakespeare; to introduce the whole body of the people into his tragedy; to print Xantippe, the

[1] M. Voltaire either forgot or did not know that "Coriolanus" was Mr. Thomson's last tragedy, and was played after his death for the benefit of his relatives.

wife of Socrates, just as she really was, a peevish, cross-grained city madam, scolding her husband, and yet fond of him; to bring the Areopagus on the stage; and, in a word, to make the whole piece a simple representation of human life; one of those pictures that exhibit a view of every state and condition. This is an undertaking attended with some difficulty; and though the sublime continued throughout is a species of writing infinitely superior to it, this mixture of the pathetic and familiar has its degree of merit. One may compare them to the "Iliad" and the "Odyssey." Mr. Lyttleton would not suffer the piece to be played, because the character of Melitus too closely resembled that of Sergeant Catbrée, to whom he was related; besides, that the whole was rather a sketch than a finished performance.

He made me a present of this drama when he last came to Holland. I translated it immediately into Dutch, my mother tongue. I did not, however, think proper to bring it on the stage at Amsterdam, though, thank God, among all our pedants, we have not one there so hateful or so impertinent as Sergeant Catbrée. The great number of actors which this play requires, deterred me from any thoughts of exhibiting it. I translated it afterward into French, and shall let this translation pass, till I have an opportunity of publishing the original.

AMSTERDAM, 1755.

Since this "The Death of Socrates" has been represented at London, but that was not the play written by Mr. Thomson.

N. B. There have been some people ridiculous enough to endeavor to refute the palpable truths advanced in this preface; pretending that Mr. Fatima could not have written it in 1755, because he died in 1754: if it was really so, what a foolish reason! The fact is, he died in 1757.

NOTE ON MAHOMET.

[*By the First Editor.*]

The literary world will perhaps think themselves obliged to me for publishing the tragedy of "Mahomet," which had been barbarously mangled in two surreptitious editions. I can venture to assure the reader that it was written in 1736, and a copy of it then sent by the author to the Prince Royal, now King of Prussia, who at that time cultivated the belles-lettres with astonishing success, and continues to make them his principal amusement.

I was at Lille in 1741, where M. de Voltaire came to pass a few days; there was then the best company of actors in the town that had even been in Provence, who presented this piece to the satisfaction of a very numerous audience. The governor and the intendant were several times present at the performance. A tragedy written in so new a taste, and on so delicate a subject, treated with such judgment and discretion, induced many prelates to have it acted in a private house by the same persons. Their opinion confirmed that of the public. The author was at the same time so happy as to get his manuscript presented to one of the first men in the church, and indeed in all Europe,[1] who supported the weight of public affairs with firmness, and judged concerning works of genius with true taste, at an age when few men have, and still fewer preserve their wit and delicacy. He decided that the piece was written

[1] Cardinal Fleury.

with all proper decorum and circumspection, and that it was impossible to handle with more prudence so dangerous a subject; but that with regard to the poetry, there were many things in it that wanted correction; these the author, to my knowledge, afterward retouched with the greatest care. This was also the opinion of another eminent personage of equal rank, and of equal abilities.

At length this excellent performance, which had been licenced according to form in many other places, was exhibited at Paris on August 9, 1742: a whole box was filled with the principal magistrates of the city; the ministers were also present, and all were of the same opinion as the excellent judges above mentioned. There were, however, some persons at the first representation who disapproved of it: whether it was that in the hurry of the action they did not sufficiently attend to the gradual process of it, or that they were little versed in stage matters,[1] they seemed shocked at Mahomet's ordering a man to commit murder, and making use of his religion to stir up an innocent youth, the instrument of his crimes, to an assassination. These gentlemen, struck with the horror of the action, did not sufficiently consider, that this murder is represented in the tragedy as the most atrocious of all crimes, and that indeed it was morally impossible it should be otherwise. The truth was, they saw indeed but one side, the usual method which men take to deceive themselves. And as they considered that side

[1] The true state of the case was that Abbé Desfontaines and some others as malicious as himself, decried the tragedy of "Mahomet," as a wicked and scandalous performance: the affair made so much noise that the prime minister, Cardinal Fleury, who had long before read and approved of it, was obliged to advise the author to withdraw it.

only, it was no wonder they should take offence, which a little more attention would easily have removed: but in the first heat of their zeal they cried out that it was a dangerous performance, and fit only to produce Ravaillacs and Jacques Clements. A most extraordinary piece of criticism which these gentlemen no doubt are by this time heartily ashamed of. This would in effect be to affirm that Hermione teaches us to assassinate kings, Electra to kill our mothers, Cleopatra and Medea to slay our own children: that Harpagon makes misers, the Gamester gamesters, and Tartuffe hypocrites. The censure of Mahomet would carry with it even more injustice than this, because the iniquity of that false prophet is represented in a light more odious and detestable than any of the vices or follies satirized in those performances. The tragedy was written directly in opposition to the Ravaillacs and Jacques Clements, insomuch that, as a person of excellent judgment lately observed, if "Mahomet" had been written in the time of Henry III. and Henry IV. it might have saved both their lives. Would one think it possible that the author of *"La Henriade"* would ever have met with such a reproach, he who has so often in that poem, and in other parts of his works, lifted up his voice, not only against such crimes, but against all those pernicious maxims which are the causes of them? The more I read that writer's works, the more have I always found the love of public good their distinguishing characteristic: every part of them inspires horror and detestation of rebellion, persecution, and fanaticism.

Is there a good and worthy citizen who would not adopt all the maxims of *"La Henriade?"* Does not that poem inspire us with the love of virtue? "Mahomet" appears to me to be written in the same

spirit, and this, I am persuaded, the author's greatest enemies will frankly acknowledge.

He soon perceived that a formidable party was raised against him; some of the most violent among them got the ear of a few great men, who not having seen the piece themselves believed everything that these gentlemen thought proper to report concerning it. The celebrated Molière, the glory of France, was once in nearly the same condition, when his *"Tartuffe"* was first exhibited; he had immediate recourse to Louis the Great, who knew and loved him. The authority of that monarch soon put an end to the sinister and malevolent misrepresentations of *"Tartuffe;"* but times are changed; that protection which is given to arts in their infant state cannot be expected to continue after those arts have been cultivated for a length of time: besides one man may not have interest to obtain that which another has procured with ease; hence some instruments must be set to work, some discussions made, some new examinations passed through, before anything can be done in his favor. The author therefore thought it most advisable to withdraw his piece, after the third representation, in hopes that time would get the better of prejudice, which must inevitably happen among a people so sensible and judicious as our own.[1] It was stated in the public papers, that the tragedy of "Mahomet" had been stopped by order of the government, which was an absolute falsehood; no such order was ever given;

[1] What the editor foresaw in 1742 did actually come to pass in 1751, when this tragedy was presented with universal applause. Cabal and persecution gave way to the voice of the public, and perhaps the more readily as many by this time began to feel some remorse at having forced a man to quit his country, who had labored so successfully for the honor of it.

and the first men in the kingdom, who had seen this tragedy, unanimously concurred in their admiration of it. Some persons having hastily transcribed a few scenes from the actors' parts, two or three imperfect editions crept into the world; it is easy to see how much they differ from the true work which I have here given. Prefixed to this tragedy are several interesting pieces; one of the most curious among them, in my opinion, is a letter written by the author to his majesty, the King of Prussia, on his return through Holland, after a visit to him. In papers of this kind, which were not originally designed for the public, one sees the real sentiments of men: I flatter myself they will afford the same pleasure to every true philosopher which they gave me in the perusal.

PREFACE TO JULIUS CÆSAR.

A Letter from Signor Algarotti, to Signor Franchini, Envoy at Florence.

(On the Tragedy of "JULIUS CÆSAR," by M. de Voltaire.)

Sir: I have deferred sending you the "Julius Cæsar" which you desired, till now, that I might have the pleasure of communicating to you the tragedy on that subject, as written by M. de Voltaire. The edition of it printed at Paris some months ago is extremely faulty; one may easily perceive in it the hand of some of those gentlemen whom Petronius calls *"Doctores Umbratici."* It is even so shamefully defective as to give us verses that have not the proper number of syllables. This piece, notwithstanding, has been as severely criticized as if M. de Voltaire himself had published it: would it not be cruelly unjust to impute to Titian, the bad coloring of one of his pictures, that had been daubed over by a modern painter? I have been fortunate enough to procure a manuscript fit to be sent to you; you will see the picture exactly as it came out of the hand of the master: I will even venture to accompany it with the remarks which you desired of me.

Not to know that there is a French language and a French theatre, cannot show a greater degree of ignorance, than not to know to what perfection Corneille and Racine carried the drama. It seemed, indeed, as if, after these great men, nothing remained to be wished for, and that all which could be

done was to endeavor to imitate them. Could one expect anything in painting after the "Galatæa" of Raphael and yet the famous head of Michelangelo, in the little Farnese, gave us an idea of a species more fierce and terrible, to which this art might be raised. In the fine arts, we do not perceive the void till after it is filled up. Most of the tragedies of the great masters I just now mentioned, whether the scene lies at Rome, Athens, or Constantinople, contain nothing more than a marriage concerted, or broken off: we can expect nothing better in this species of tragedy, wherein love makes peace or war with a smile. I cannot help thinking that the drama is capable of something infinitely superior to this. Julius Cæsar is to be a proof of it. The author of the tender "Zaïre" breathes nothing here but sentiments of ambition, liberty, and revenge.

Tragedy should be an imitation of great men; it is that which distinguishes it from comedy; but if the actions which it represents are likewise great, the distinction is still better marked out, and by these means we may arrive at a nobler species. Do we not admire Mark Antony more at Philippi than at Actium? I am apprehensive, notwithstanding, that reasonings of this kind will meet with the strongest opposition. We must have very little acquaintance with human nature not to know that prejudice generally gets the better of reason; and above all, those prejudices that are authorized by a sex that imposes laws upon us, which we always submit to with pleasure.

Love has been too long in possession of the French theatre to suffer any other passions to supplant it, which inclines me to think that Julius Cæsar will meet with the fate of Themistocles, Alcibiades, and

many other great men of Athens, that of being admired by all mankind; while ostracism banished them from their own country.

In some places M. de Voltaire has imitated Shakespeare, an English poet, who united in the same piece the most childish absurdities and the finest strokes of the true sublime. He has made the same use of him as Virgil did of Ennius, and taken from him the last two scenes, which are, doubtless, the finest models of eloquence which the stage ever produced.

Quum flueret lutulentus, erat quod tollere velles.

What is it but the remains of barbarism in Europe, to endeavor to make those bounds which power and policy have prescribed to separate states and kingdoms, the limits also of science, and the fine arts, whose progress might be so widely extended by that commerce and mutual light which they would throw on each other; a reflection which may be more serviceable to the French nation than any other, as it is exactly in the case of an author, from whom the public expect more in proportion to what they have already received from him. France is so highly polished and cultivated that we have a right to demand of her, not only that she should approve, but that she should adopt and enrich herself with everything that is excellent among her neighbors:

Tros Rutulusve fuat, nullo discrimine habeto.

There is one objection to this tragedy, which I should not have mentioned to you, but that I heard it made by many, that it has but three acts; this, say the critics, is against all the rules of the stage,

which require that there should be exactly five. It is certainly one of the first rules of the drama that the representation should not take up more time than the real action. They have therefore very rationally limited that time to three hours, because a longer would weary the attention; and, at the same time, would prevent our uniting in the same point of view, the different circumstances of the action. Upon this principle, we have divided the play into five acts, for the convenience of the spectators, and of the author also, who has leisure to bring about, during these intervals, any incident necessary to the plot or catastrophe. The whole of the objection, then, is no more than that the presentation of "Julius Cæsar" lasts but two hours instead of three; and if that is no fault, neither can the division of its acts be esteemed as one; because the same rule which requires that an action of three hours should be divided into five acts, will require also, that an action of two hours should be divided into three only. There is no reason why, because the utmost extent of the play is limited to three hours, we should not make it less; nor can I see why a tragedy, where the three unities are observed, which is interesting, and excites terror and compassion, which in short does everything in two hours, that others do in three, should not be equally good. A statue wherein the fine proportions and other rules of the art are observed, is not a less fine statue, because it is smaller than another, made by the same rules. Nobody, I believe, thinks "The Venus de Medici" less perfect in its kind than "The Gladiator," because it is but four feet high, and "The Gladiator" six. M. de Voltaire, perhaps, gave his "Cæsar" less extent than is usually allowed to dramatic performances, only to sound the opinion and taste of the public

by an essay, if we may give that name to so finished a piece. It would have made a kind of revolution in the French theatre, and had been, perhaps, too bold a venture, to talk of liberty and politics for three hours together, to a nation that had been so long accustomed to see Mithridates fighting and whining, when he was just on the point of marching to the capitol. We are surely obliged to M. de Voltaire for his conduct, and should by no means condemn him for not bringing love or women into his play; born, as they are, to inspire soft and tender sentiments, they would have played an absurd and ridiculous part between Brutus and Cassius, *atroces animæ.* They make indeed such conspicuous figures elsewhere, that they have no reason to complain of being excluded from "Cæsar." I shall pass over the many detached beauties to be met with in this piece, the strength of its numbers, and the variety of images and sentiments scattered throughout. What might we not expect from the author of *"Brutus"* and *"La Henriade"* The scene of the conspiracy is one of the finest we have ever seen on any stage: it has called into action that which we never met with before but in dull narration.

> *Segnius irritant animos demissa per aures*
> *Quam quae sunt oculis subjecta fidelibus et quae*
> *Ipse sibi tradit spectator.*

Even the death of Cæsar passes almost in sight of the spectators, and thus prevents a recital of it, which howsoever beautiful, must have been comparatively cold and languid; events of this kind, together with every circumstance attending them, being already known to all the world.

I cannot sufficiently admire this tragedy, when I

consider what a variety of incidents there are in it, how great the characters are, and how finely supported; what a noble contrast between Brutus and Cæsar! What makes this subject most difficult to handle is the great art required to describe, on the one hand, Brutus with a savage, ferocious virtue, and even bordering on ingratitude, but at the same time engaged in a righteous cause, at least to all appearances, and conformable to the times he lived in; and on the other hand, Cæsar, full of clemency and the most amiable virtues, heaping favors on his enemies, and yet endeavoring to destroy the liberty of his country. We are strongly interested for both of them during the whole action of the piece, though it should seem as if the passions must hurt and destroy each other reciprocally in the end, like two several weights equal and opposed to each other, and consequently could produce no effect but that of sending the spectators back disgusted, and without any emotion. Some such reflections most probably induced a brother poet[1] to declare, that he looked upon this subject as the rock of dramatic authors, and that he would gladly propose it to any of his rivals. But M. de Voltaire, not content with these difficulties, seems desirous of creating more, by making Brutus the son of Cæsar; which, however, is founded on history. He has even, by these means, found an opportunity of introducing some charming scenes, and throwing into his piece a new interest, which is united to the action, and brings on the catastrophe. The harangue of Antony produces a

[1] M. Martelli, who wrote several tragedies in Italian. He made use of a new species of rhymes, in the manner of Alexandrines, a novelty which was by no means favorable to his performances.

fine effect, and is, in my opinion, a model of seducing eloquence. Upon the whole, we may with truth assert that M. de Voltaire, in this tragedy, has opened a new path, and, at the same time, trod in it with the highest success.

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